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DID SHE LOVE HIM ?

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DID SHE LOVE HIM?

A Novel.

By JAMES GRANT,

AUTHOR OF 'THE ROMANCE OF WAR,' 'UNDER THE RED DRAGON,' ETC.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

LONDON:

TINSLEY BROTHERS, 8 CATHERINE ST., STRAND.

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DID SHE LOVE HIM?

CHAPTER I.

‘IN VEXED BERMOUTHES.’

SWIFT as the electric telegraph nowadays may the novelist in his story range over all the world without violating the ‘unities,’ that pet word of the old critics.

It was a summer evening in one of the Bermuda isles, where summer is perpetual—the land of Caliban and the scene of Shakespeare’s *Tempest*, and of one of Waller’s now-forgotten poems; long the fabled abode of devils and, according to old Jourdan, ‘a most prodigious and enchanting place, affording nothing but gusts, storms, and foul weather.’

Evening parade was over, and, attired

somewhat lightly, his neck open, his shell-jacket unbuttoned, and a broad round straw-hat on his head, Rowland Stanley was seated under the verandah in front of his quarters, or lounging rather in a long cane-bottomed easy-chair, a cigar between his teeth—a cigar taken from a case the gift of ‘little Wickets,’ Fanny Conyers’s brother—a glass of brandy-and-water beside him, and in his hand a novel, the perusal of which he often relinquished to gaze dreamily at the sea and the scenery, such as it was.

Before him stretched such ‘yellow sands’ as those of which Ariel sings so invitingly; the same sands whereon, perhaps, the first Englishman who ever trod these shores landed—to wit, Henry May, and who, when cast away there on the 17th of December 1593, found thereby the quaint wrecks of three ancient Spanish argosies, one of which had been named, after her captain, Juan Bermudas, whose name he gave to those four hundred islets that are now the key to our Western colonies.

Bermuda appears a fairyland at first sight, but ere long the eye wearies of the leafless cedar, though ever green; of the somewhat barren isles, with the sheets of shining water between; of the sands where the turtles sprawl, and the rocks where the palmetto berries, or wild plums, pumpkins, and golden melons ripen; though there are sweet little valleys, where coffee, cotton, and indigo grow, and groves of the orange and lemon, citron and lime, glow under the tropical sun, and under the foliage of which the kingfisher flits and the ground-dove builds its nest.

But as there are no places worthy of being called towns—Hamilton and St. George's being little better than villages—Bermuda is a station where the young English officer soon becomes bored and ennuyed; hence Stanley, after the excitements of his year's leave at home, cordially agreed with those of the mess who termed the station a 'horrible hole.' He, with his peculiar chum and subaltern, Neddy Knollys, had done all the mild stimulations of the place; had investigated all the caves that

abound in stalactites and stalagmites for which Walsingham is so famous ; had picnicked with the ladies of the regiment, and such other feasible girls as could be found, at Paynter Vale, under the shadow of the famous double-stemmed calabash-tree ; done amateur theatricals, and the Governor's balls, and feasts at Mount Langton ; fished for mudian lawyers and gray snappers ; shot wild ducks and gray plover in all directions, without leave or license ; been mooning together on detachment at Ireland Island, where they got mutually so cross with life that they quarrelled, but became reconciled the moment they rejoined at St. George's, where Stanley's corps—the only one in Bermuda—with a few of the Royal Artillery, formed the garrison. All these and other things had Stanley done again and again, and found that, so far as life at Bermuda was concerned, there was 'nothing in it,' as Sir Cullender Yawn says in the farce.

The first thing that roused him was the arrival of a letter from Tom Seymour, after many unintelligible delays, describing all the

misconception in the matter of that unlucky camellia, on which he had somewhat foolishly, he began to think—especially after his little *affaire du cœur* at San Miguel—permitted too much to hinge; and though Milly Allingham had trifled with him very much, he now began to conclude that he had been too precipitate, and she no doubt had consoled or revenged herself by accepting Val Reynolds, though no reference to any such event was made in a subsequent letter from Tom Seymour; but then that letter was full of his own exciting affairs—the elopement with Mabel, their marriage, and all that had transpired since Stanley’s sudden evanishment from the Hussar ball at Brighton.

Over the myriad miles of ocean his mind went back to that night; how remote and distant seemed all connected with it now!

For a man in Stanley’s mood of mind Bermuda was about the worst place he could be stationed in. Out of the garrison there was little or no society; the population are negroes, and though some of the better-class

women are pretty, they are often half-caste and *gauche*—fearfully so, after Regent Street and Rotten Row. He had rejoined in a discontented and somewhat moody frame of mind, and to his brother-officers he was rather an enigma.

‘What the devil has come to Rowly?’ one would say to another. ‘Has he fallen in love, or debt, or what?’

‘He can’t be such a muff as to have fallen very deep in either,’ responded Neddy Knollys; ‘for wherever we have been—from Chatham to Candahar, from Athlone to Agra—he has been the jolliest of the jolly. If he kept a wicket, he marched off the field with his bat on his shoulder; if he rode a race, won it; if he went to a ball, he had the prettiest and the best round-dancing girl to himself all night; so *what* is up now? He has got into the hands of the Israelites, is going to send in his papers and leave us, or something.’

It was quite evident that the old mess-room jokes—about how Brown broke the bay mare’s knees; of Jones’s spill at the hurdle-

race; of Robinson’s famous playing, when he made ever so many strokes, all running, off the red ball, and yet lost a pot of money to the paymaster, &c.—all palled upon and failed to interest him.

‘How did you spend your leave, Rowly?’ asked Neddy Knollys, one of those surmisers, more than once.

‘I spent it in London,’ he replied curtly.

‘Doing what?’ asked Ned.

‘Studying.’

‘Oh, come—by Jove! studying—*you*?’

‘Closely, old fellow.’

‘What?’

‘Pretty faces—town’s the best place in the world for that,’ he would reply, finding that chaff must be met with the same commodity. But often, in the barrack of that stupid place, when gazing at planets, at the southern cross, at the stars, or at ‘the hole in the sky’ (that place where there are no stars all), as the sailors call it; or when, as on this evening, he was seated in the verandah, gazing at the sea, he had many a waking dream of

her who was far, far away, doing he knew not what—flirting, conversing, or driving, he knew not with whom—and in spirit kissed her.

How little could he have thought that often she, too, at these identical times, was thinking of *him* in the same fashion!

And so he strove, but vainly, to adopt the maxim, that ‘our best wisdom is to enjoy the hour that we live, and not to look forward too keenly to the future. To the day be the evil thereof.’ He was trying his best to think so now, as he lolled in his cane-framed and cane-bottomed easy-chair, with his heels higher than his head, alternately watching the concentric circles of smoke from his well-moustached mouth, and the glittering sea, where there was, beating off Grassy Bay, one of those Bermudian boats, the cut of which is so peculiar, having a light draught forward, a long heel or deep stern-post, with one mast well raked aft, carrying a triangular mainsail, foresail, jib, and a gaff-topsail, tapering into the blue sky.

‘Why should I think of her still?’ he muttered, as the novel fell from his hand, and he would have been puzzled to tell what he had been reading about. ‘Is not the past done with for ever? I felt it so in that isle of San Miguel, as much as if I was living in another world, and had become another fellow.’

That brief interval of lunacy or revenge, which you will, in the island was over and forgotten; and now, after the tidings in Tom’s first letter, there is no doubt that Milly’s image had been occurring to Stanley more and more, again and again. So true it is, as Miss Braddon says, that ‘when a man has once loved a woman, her face is always rising up before him, pleading to him to think tenderly of her, let her have used him ever so badly. It always ends with his forgiving her. The memory of the days when she loved him is too much for his manhood. It always ends so.’

But now, unless she had married ‘Reynolds or some other devilish fellow,’ Stanley, after Tom’s letter, had nothing to forgive, and

all his heart was going forth to Milly more than ever.

Yet he struggled with himself against that futile yearning, and would say to himself for the thousandth time,

‘Why *do* I think of her, muff that I am, especially after that piece of folly with old De Vega’s wife in the Azores? At this moment, perhaps, she is flirting with some such ass as Larkspur—flirting in such a way as she alone can do, scientifically, without looking or speaking unless it suits her, though well aware that every word uttered has a secret meaning, all unknown to the unconscious outsiders. Well do I know my lady’s game and mode of procedure.’

When drawing pictures such as these he grew very savage; and yet it chanced that, at this identical moment, Milly, while enjoying herself as best she might at the Hôtel de Hollande, overlooking the long bridge of boats at Cologne, and playing *Vergissmeinnicht* with great *empressement* to a blue-coated Prussian Herr Major, was surmising, a little spitefully,

whether or not *he* was making love to 'that Portuguese octoroon,' as she called her, at San Miguel, for she had not as yet heard of his having rejoined his regiment at Bermuda.

That night there were to be amateur theatricals, under the patronage of the Governor, for some charity; and a spacious gun-shed had been got up as a theatre, for which Neddy Knollys had painted the scenery on sundry canvas bed-sheets, on which B.O. and a broad arrow figured conspicuously. The histrionic aspirants—with a sublime contempt for sloats and flies, wings, traps, and lime-lights—had chosen, of course, the *Tempest*, and Stanley was to figure as Prospero, with Neddy, close-shaven, for Miranda, while the senior captain was to be Caliban.

As a counter-irritant to Milly, Stanley had been trying hard to get up a little affair with a pretty half-caste, who played Ariel with a smaller amount of raiment than even the tropics warranted, and played her part well, for she had slender and graceful limbs, though she sang very feebly,

‘Where the bee sucks, there suck I;
In a cowslip’s bell I lie,’ &c. ;

and Stanley was just beginning to think of some pretty present for her, such as the only jeweller’s shop in St. George’s might furnish, when there came a smart single knock on the door of his room.

‘Come in,’ he responded; and then, passing through the uncarpeted and somewhat empty-looking apartment, came the bugle-major, who acted as regimental postman, and stood erect as a pike before him.

‘Mail from Europe just come in—a letter for you, sir.’

‘Thanks.’

The non-commissioned officer saluted, and marched off.

‘From Tom of course—no. A lady’s hand to me—unknown, by Jove!’ He opened it, and sprang to his feet, exclaiming, ‘Heavens above! it is from Milly—Allingham—and to ME!’

CHAPTER II.

‘A LOVERS’ QUARREL IS BUT LOVE RENEWED.’

ROWLAND STANLEY was so thoroughly bewildered that he had perused her letter thrice in nervous haste before he quite took in the whole tenor of it.

‘London.

‘My dear Captain Stanley,—I have now learned from Mabel Seymour that you know all—the mistake about that wretched little flower at Brighton, and *how* it was by chance appropriated by Captain Reynolds—not given to him by me; a flower in which your fate and mine was, by my folly rather than your romance, bound up; and I now know more—how well you loved me then, and how you love me still.’ (‘She knows nothing of my folly on that island, bless her!’ thought Stanley.) ‘If you—oh, I know not how to pen

it, for the whole spirit and tenor of this letter is so unusual—if you care to write to me, need I say the pleasure it will give me to hear from you? You twice proposed marriage, and in my pride and petulance I trifled with your heart and my own; hence I feel that I owe you reparation. I have done much to offend you, Rowland, but you love me, and—I love you. Let this *amende* satisfy. You know my pride, and how I must be humbled to write thus; but it is to *you*.—Believe me ever yours faithfully,

MILLY ALLINGHAM.'

When he first opened this startling letter, there fell therefrom a tiny bunch of withered forget-me-nots, tied with a slender white ribbon. Carefully and anxiously, as if the fragments were something very precious indeed, he gathered them up; and as he did so his heart, now beating tumultuously, went back to the night of the ball in Park Lane, and the subsequent gift of a bouquet in the Park. How long, long ago these little events seemed to have happened!

His soul was filled now with the purest gratitude, and he felt himself brimming over with joy. He had no pride, so called, in the reception of a letter so singular and unusual from the impulsive Milly, or in the conviction that her great love for him had humbled the coquette; for humbled and contrite she must have been to take the initiative thus, and write such a letter to him, confiding so in his love and honour.

His whole mind was now filled by a great gush of remorse for his jealousy, injustice, and haste at Brighton, and his vile mental aberration—for such he deemed it—at San Miguel. ‘How could I be such a jackass!’ he muttered a hundred times. ‘Oh, if Milly knew of that, what would she think of me, the dear, dear angel!’ &c., and much more to the same purpose. But for his own precipitance and intemperate haste, he might now have been the husband of Milly; she might now have been by his side gazing out on the waters of the Western Ocean, or he with her in England on an extension of leave; or he

might have cut the service for her sake altogether.

So, all unthinking that the mail would not leave St. George's for a week, or heedless of the circumstance, he flew to his desk, threw it open like a madman, and wrote to Milly an impassioned letter, full of prayerful thanks, fervent love, eternal gratitude, and much more that was meant for her eye alone.

That part of his letter achieved, he began to consider the more important portion that was to follow—the suggestions for or arrangement of their own plans for the future.

In ten days more, he wrote, the regiment was to sail for the Mediterranean—he believed for garrison duty at Gibraltar. This at least would bring him to Europe, and nearer to *her*. If no seniors were applying for leave, he would obtain it again; and after the two thousand and odd miles of the Atlantic had been traversed, a week or so would find him by her side again. And here once more he ran out into the loving incoherences peculiar to such an epistle as his; and praying her to

write to him again, addressed to the regiment at Gibraltar, he despatched it by his servant to the post, and became more composed, though he read and re-read her letter ere he could prevail upon himself, after kissing it very tenderly, to consign it to his desk.

How little could he have thought, when he heard the drums beating for reveille that morning, that when the same drums beat at sunset he should sit down at the mess-table an engaged man—engaged to Milly Allingham!

It was long ere he could persuade himself to join that festive board. He was so happy amid his own thoughts, and sat long alone in the starry dusk, while the voices of the red-bird, the mocking-bird, and of the Virginia nightingale, came softly on the evening air; for now, though far away in Bermuda, his waking dreams were once again of the dazzling Milly and a future in which she figured as his wife, and his own for ever.

Thus preoccupied, it may be supposed that, in the garrison theatricals that night, he made a sad muddle of his part as Prospero,

and rather perplexed Neddy Knollys by often addressing him in this fashion :

‘Twelve year since, dear *Milly*, twelve year since,
Thy father was the Duke of Milan, and
A prince of power.’

‘What the devil *are* you talking about?’ quoth Miranda aside; and then took her cue, ‘Sir, are not you my father?’ &c. But the name of Milly would crop up again and again, till Knollys told Stanley he must ‘certainly be screwed,’ as he made them both the subject of unbounded laughter; and Neddy, though usually an extremely good-tempered fellow, became furiously indignant; and as they were returning to their quarters after the invariable champagne that concludes such festivities, he turned short round upon Stanley, and said,

‘Who the deuce *is* this Milly, who seems to have come between you and your seven senses to-night?’

The advent of the letter, together with the champagne he had imbibed, had greatly softened the heart of Stanley, who now be-

came seized with one of the fits of confidence which attack men at times so unaccountably ; so he unbosomed himself to his friend—told about his quarrel with Milly and the spirit of her letter.

‘ By Jove, that girl is a brick !’ was Neddy’s warmest and offhand comment. ‘ You’ll marry her, of course, and be happy all the days and nights of your lives, like the people in novels,’ he added, laughing, while a strange and bitter expression stole over his open face ; and Stanley had no subsequent regret in making a confidant of his friend ; for Knollys, a handsome and rollicking young Englishman, had his gloomy and thoughtful moments at times,—his ‘doldrums,’ he called them,—for he had a story in which there was more romance than in Stanley’s, a dark chapter of his life ; and this fact, perhaps, made them the firmer friends mutually.

They had both in their solitary moments turned to Nature, reflection, and so forth, as comforters ; and though the former is said to be a wondrous consoler for those who can

appreciate her endearments and consolations, as Knollys said, 'it took a deuced lot of her to console one in the Bermudas.'

Neddy's great sorrow all came of a quarrel—a lovers' quarrel too.

He had loved just such a girl as Milly Allingham, bright, coquettish, and fond of admiration—his cousin Kate Wilmot. They had been playmates in childhood; but when Knollys returned to London, after being a couple of years with his regiment in Ireland, Kate, then in her first season and all the bloom of her beauty, became at once the star of his life, the realisation of all his dreams; and he fell in love with her, of course, and the familiar ties of cousinship made this love run perhaps too smoothly, for the young lady was proud, petulant, and at times somewhat exacting.

'You must go with me into the Row,' said she one day, in the tone of one well used to have every wish but too readily acceded to.

'If you will sing me your song of the "Moonbeam," I shall do all I can to attend you.'

‘But I won’t sing! All you can!’ exclaimed the young lady pettishly, and with a haughty smile in her eyes and on her lips. ‘I know some one in particular who would do more.’

‘More! *Who* could do more for you than I?’

‘Colonel Hippisley.’

‘The man is a—well, a dotard!’ said Neddy angrily, for the attentions of this old field-officer, who was enormously wealthy,—attentions too palpably encouraged by Kate’s family,—made him the blackest of all *bêtes noires* to her cousin.

‘He is little more than twice as old as you; and then he is as rich as Cræsus.’

‘And he is encouraged for his wealth!’

‘How?’

‘As your admirer!’

‘I encourage none, Mr. Knollys.’

‘Neddy,’ he urged.

‘Mr. Knollys,’ she repeated, pouting. ‘He gives me tickets or boxes for everything, bouquets, lovely presents, and all the devotion—’

‘Of an old fool!’

‘Of a brave gentleman, who has earned many a medal which *you* have yet to win.’

‘Dearest Kate, you’ll break my heart if you talk to me in this tone!’

‘Oh, nonsense; men’s hearts don’t break so easily.’

Then more bitter words than we care to record ensued. The quarrel came greatly to the satisfaction of Kate Wilmot’s parents, and they parted, these two, a silly youth and silly girl, yet loving each other passionately; parted with cold and haughty words, which they thought were never to be forgotten, and of course never, never to be forgiven; and not long after Stanley found himself a guest at the bridal of Kate Wilmot and Colonel Hippisley, a well-preserved old beau, whose dyed whiskers and moustache were miracles of art, but whose settlements were every way satisfactory. But Stanley often said he never felt such pity in his heart before as when he saw the bride. It was less a marriage than a sale, the ceremony.

Her heart—if heart she had then—was

with Edward Knollys, and not with the old man whose shrivelled fingers placed the consecrated ring on her left hand, and led her away with a smile that had more of triumph, cunning, and pride than love or ardour in it. He was naturally a cold and grim man, and had been long enough a bachelor to be very eccentric; moreover, he was, as the sequel proved, intensely jealous and cunning; yet this creature Kate had vowed to love, honour, and obey.

The lily was not more delicate than Kate seemed in her bridal veil and dress, 'which looked like a frost-work suited to the frozen spirit it shrouded.'

In that hour of triumphant bitterness, if we may use such a term, what availed her exquisite dress of lace and silk, her almost priceless veil, her costly bouquet in its wondrous *bouquetier*, her tiny slippers and delicate gloves, the velvet caskets full of pearls and diamonds, and all the showy shop-like splendour of her bridal gifts—the gifts of reprehensive friends!

‘It is a most pitiful sacrifice,’ said one kind-hearted old lady.

‘It is a thundering shame!’ was the comment of her son; and many more were of the opinion, that, even with all the elements of wealth and luxury, such a union between December and May was but a loathsome sight, and that happiness could never come of it.

No doubt the colonel was proud of his bride; it was a brilliant achievement for an old fellow like him, to carry off from all her younger admirers a girl so beautiful as Kate Wilmot; and though he felt a malicious pleasure in parading her before them in the Row or other public places, he was rather careful and cautious about those he invited to his lonely villa near Hampton Court, where he chose to seclude her, though Kate had begged hard for a mansion in Belgravia.

Her petulant pride of heart was gone now, and with it went all her love of gaiety and pleasure. The sacrifice, the dreadful mistake, she had made came terribly home to her heart,

together with the crushing conviction that the deed she had done was irrevocable. Her music was neglected, her piano seldom opened, and she had a horror of the long stupid evenings, during which, when they were alone, with his handkerchief spread over his face and the *Times* half dropping from his hand, her husband dozed the hours away in an easy-chair, till his valet carried him off to bed; while she, when walking or riding or driving, when amid busy crowds or alone, had ever by her side a face and form that none could see; in her ear, a voice heard by her alone; a heart next hers, yet that was far away. Day by day she cherished more and more her secret love for the absent Neddy Knollys, abandoning herself to it rather than seeking to thrust it from her, though often she clasped her hands and wrung them in silent agony when none was by to see her.

Colonel Hippisley knew nothing of the love that had existed between the cousins, and, to do him justice, watched with anxiety the growing pallor in his young wife's cheek ;

but he had no idea of 'the worm' that was in the bud, till one day, when, over a glass of port, he was sitting at 'the Rag,' intrenched behind an outspread newspaper, he heard some fragments of a conversation regarding his wife and her cousin Edward Knollys—their love, their quarrel, and how Kate had married him—*him*, Colonel Hippisley!—in revenge, 'cutting off her nose to spite her pretty face, by Jove, don't you know, and all that sort of thing,' added one 'confounded puppy,' as the colonel thought him, to the other.

Though choking with rage and mortification, jealousy and disappointment, he softly put down his paper, took his hat and stick, and issued into the street, to think over what he had heard. So it was thus his marriage was canvassed and talked about—the brilliant Kate had married him simply in revenge, and now she was repentant. This accounted for the pallor of her face, the lassitude and indifference of her manner, the steady languor and gloom, no sunshine or gaiety could brighten or dispel. He saw it all now—all, when too

late. He recalled then a thousand little episodes and trifles connected with this very cousin prior to his marriage, and these had the effect of galling him to frenzy ; old though his blood was, it rose to fever-heat ; and he muttered in his rage as he walked along, using much bad language, but failing to relieve his mind thereby.

Home—he would not go home. The very thought of Kate sitting where he could picture her, calm and pale, indifferent to his presence or absence, careless of all the world around her, galled and worried him. Thus he instantly conceived and put in practice a scheme for discovering the truth of what those men said, for unmasking Kate if it were true, and to punish her for the deceit she had practised.

We have said that the colonel was eccentric and intensely cunning. He drew a heavy cheque on his banker, and wrote a brief note to Kate, saying that he had been suddenly summoned to North Wales about some property he had there, and would be absent a week or two ; and as he would have many

uninteresting people to see, he must deny himself the pleasure of taking her with him.

The evening post brought this missive to Kate, who had never been left an entire day alone since her marriage; and as she read it a sigh of actual relief escaped her, and for the first time for many, many weeks a real, and not an artificial, smile rippled over her pale face.

Two days brought her another letter from the absent Othello, who, in the furtherance of his scheme, had actually gone to North Wales, and now informed her he was going to take a boat and go fishing on the Bala Lake. There, in due time, the empty boat was found floating about with the colonel's wideawake, overcoat, gloves, and cigar-case. All his tenantry believed the poor man had been drowned, and spent days in dragging the lake for the sad remains of their landlord, who at the time was airing his figure at Basle in Switzerland.

To say that Kate—though inexpressibly shocked, and repenting that she had not loved him more—either wept or mourned for him

would be to state that which is not true, though she donned the deepest garb of woe that even Jay could furnish, and more than ever secluded herself in her mansion near Bushey Park.

A few weeks after this event, it chanced that Neddy's regiment was quartered in the Tower, and nothing was so natural as that he should leave a card on his widowed cousin, after the shocking event that had occurred.

She was at home, and in her widow's weeds looked touchingly handsome. What more natural than that he should come again and again! Was he not her cousin? And soon he found that she was his own loving Kate, and full of that repentance which was sure to lead to happiness.

'Your—your husband is dead now,' said he, on one occasion, not that the information was new to her, but that the assertion implied something ulterior.

'I have been faithful to him, Neddy,' she replied, with a tender smile; 'very faithful.'

‘To the spirit of your promise; yet in your heart, dear Kate—’

‘O God, forgive me, but in my heart of hearts I never ceased to love you!’ she exclaimed, in broken and touching voice.

‘Poor child! for you were but a child, Kate, on that accursed day which rent you from me—a crisis born of my own folly!’

‘And mine too, Neddy; we were mad to quarrel, loving each other as we did.’

An expression—the passion of great love—filled all the girl’s face with wondrous beauty and animation as she spoke, and Knollys started forward.

‘Not yet, dear Neddy,’ said she, averting her cheek; ‘you must not kiss me—*yet*.’

And now they—like Stanley in his waking hours—were so happy; so true it is that

‘A lovers’ quarrel is but love renewed.’

Every moment Neddy Knollys could steal from his duties at the Tower was now spent at the house of his widowed cousin, and the time of their probation, as they deemed it, flew swiftly past.

With Hampton Court Gardens and Bushey Park to wander in side by side and talk over their future, how delicious were the hours! How enchanting the summer evenings spent on the river, when he and she were alone, and let their boat float idly with the tide, he forgetful of all the world but the lovely girl who sat before him, his own Kate once more, with her heavy brown hair so smoothly banded over her white brow, and with her soft dark eyes gazing shyly into his; and she also, forgetful of all but the handsome and athletic young fellow in his light jersey, with his idle sculls poised on his knees, and his eyes bent fondly, dreamily, and passionately on her face! And so, hour by hour, would they sit, while the boat drifted on and on, past willowed isles, and all that lovely silvan scenery for which old Father Thames is unsurpassed, till the shades of evening mellowed on the stream, the gold and crimson died away on the chestnut, the oak, and the beech, and the last crow cawed and wheeled aloft on his homeward way.

One evening, after such a dreamy row upon the river, they were seated together in an arbour of the garden adjoining the house. The sunlight had died away from the topmost branches of the giant chestnuts in Bushey Park, and all was very still around them. Nothing seemed to stir but the last gnats that darted about in groups on the warm evening air. How sweetly tranquil looked the garden on this occasion; how exquisite was the fragrance of the lilac, the rose-trees, and the hawthorn; while the pink-and-white blossoms of the apple-trees shimmered in the strengthening light of the moon!

The lover-cousins were talking in low and confidential tones—tones that were full of exquisite tenderness—of their future plans, their future hopes and mutual home. Kate's head was on Neddy's breast, and her eyes, like his, were full of happiness and love.

‘You remember what we quarrelled about, darling?’ said Neddy.

‘The song of the “Moonbeam”—oh, yes.’

‘Sing it to me now, love.’

‘O Neddy, there is nothing I could refuse you *now*!’ she exclaimed; and with wonderful sweetness and pathos she began the little song referred to—a quaint song from the German, we believe:

‘Silently, oh, silently,
The moonbeam falls on me;
Silently, as silently,
It falls on land and sea.

Silently, still silently,
Creation’s wings wax bright;
Silently, more silently,
Bright morn succeeds to night.

Oh, let my soul, my soul, thus silently
Depart from earthly clay;
Thus silently, but beamingly,
Enter the realms of day.’

‘How like the old tender times it seems to hear you sing so, darling Kate—my own, own Kate!’

‘I often feared, Neddy, that we loved each other too much as cousins to be—to be—’

‘Happy as husband and wife, do you mean?’

‘Yes.’

‘You have been six months a widow,’ said he softly.

‘Six whole months, darling.’

‘*When* is it to be, Kate?’

‘At least a year must expire.’

‘A year—a *whole* year, dearest!’

‘Yes, Neddy. Otherwise what would the world say? and what would—’

‘Colonel Hippisley think?’ croaked a voice there was *no* mistaking, as the dreadful figure of the supposed drowned man, dreadful at such a time, appeared like an apparition before them. ‘Very sorry to interrupt you, my dear madam,’ said he, with a ferocious sneer; ‘but I hope this gentleman will now see the propriety of betaking himself to his military duties at the Tower of London, and with as little delay as possible.’

A low wail escaped Kate as she sank down in a state of insensibility; and how he made his way eastward that night to the Tower, whether by ’bus, cab, or railway, was always a mystery to poor Neddy Knollys.

CHAPTER III.

TOM IN PRISON.

MR. SKEEMES, the solicitor, had said that he did not exactly see how Mr. Alfred Foxley's visit to Seymour bore upon the case; yet his production in evidence he deemed to be absolutely necessary after Mabel informed him at a subsequent visit of the proposal of marriage he had made for himself, of the views he long had regarding her, and his steady and undisguised hatred of her husband.

He saw an animus at once. He could, through the medium of his legal education and the general bent of his own mind, understand any emotion that was hateful; and jealousy he knew to be the most fierce and bitter of human passions, for it is born of personal vanity, and in Foxley's instance it was farther inflamed by cupidity and baffled avarice.

Aware now that Mabel's father was a man of great wealth, though displeased by her marriage, Mr. Skeemes became quite an enthusiast in her affairs, and while thoughtfully pulling his under lip, a custom he had, he said,

‘Have no fears, my dear young lady—I’ll pull him through,’ he added, using unconsciously the words of Dr. Clavicle, who ‘pulled Tom through’ the effect of Foxley’s other monstrous act of malice; and dashing off a note addressed to ‘Mr. William Weazle, Scotland Yard,’ he rose from his desk, to hint that the interview was ended.

Armed with certain instructions and directions from the lawyer, with a heart swollen by the tenderest love and the keenest anxiety, Mabel set out to visit Tom in his prison. On this day her usually gentle eyes wore an expression new to them; it was mournful and wild, half imploring and half defiant, as she turned out of Lincoln’s Inn Fields.

As she drew on her gloves they caused her a painful association of ideas; and her

mind—in terrible contrast to her present condition and errand—went back to that day twelve months ago, and the occasion on which she won from poor Tom a box of three dozen pairs of $6\frac{1}{2}$, of which this pair, now so carefully darned, were the last; and on this morning she carefully cleaned them with india-rubber.

‘A year ago—a year ago!’ she muttered. It seemed but yesterday when she won them, in a bet on the University Boat-race, when she was with a brilliant party, whose hilarity not even the cold March wind that blew over Barnes Common and raised tiny waves at Corney Reach could repress; on that day when every one—gentle and simple, high and low, even to the veriest street-gamin, the cab-driver on his whip, the drayman on his bridle, the costermonger at his donkey’s ears—displays a bit of ribbon, light or dark blue, according to his taste or fancy; and when more is thought of the stroke’s biceps than the state of the money-market or the fate of nations.

All the scene and those who were with her came back to memory now, even to Milly's Maltese terrier, which had a dark-blue cockade at his collar—dark blue as Mabel remembered—to tease Rowland Stanley, who had certain jealous thoughts of an Oxford undergraduate.

How much had come to pass since then ! Yet poor Mabel did not repine ; and this oblivion of all she had relinquished and lost was born of her affection for Tom—*it was love*.

As one in a dream, she threaded her way afoot till she reached the dreary prison—the dark or smoke-blackened wall she surveyed with haggard eyes, while her heart beat painfully—and presented her name and order to a sulky-looking official clad in a blue livery, with a waistbelt and brass buttons, half policeman and half railway-guard in aspect, who scrutinised her with coldness through a grille like a gridiron, yet not without interest.

Her cheeks were blanched and pale, her eyes red with tears that started to them afresh as she heard bolt after bolt withdrawn, chain

after chain fall, and lock after lock undone, and then secured again behind her. Her heart beat more wildly; every pulsation became a throb of pain; so great was her mingled sense of sorrow, misery, and most unmerited shame, that she seemed to *hear* every throb in her bosom; and the whole prison, with its whitewashed corridors, archways, stairs, and passages, seemed to her overstrained mind like those mysterious places we wander through in perturbed dreams, and also like one vast complicated lock, which barred-in her husband from the sunshine and the busy world without.

‘Number seventy’s girl has come to see him!’ she heard a voice say. Even Tom’s name had been taken from him in these realms of gloom, and he was reduced to a number.

‘His wife, is she?’ she heard another say.

‘So they all say. She ’as her marriage-lines, I dessay; but it ain’t no business of ours. Now, then, young woman, you stand here, please.’

And heedless of their unintended insolence—her heart having ‘sunk too low for special woe’—she paused mechanically at a grating in an archway, beyond which appeared another grating about ten feet distant, with a warder seated on a wooden seat between.

Ere this Tom had undergone all the degradation to which prison-rules had subjected the untried prisoner, for he was committed on a charge of felony—committed without bail being accepted.

He had undergone the horror of being brought thither in the van, handcuffed, though he had no more idea of escaping than of flying; he had been weighed, and his weight entered in a book—a silly process, that only seemed to hint that he was becoming less and less the lord of his own proper person; his handsome brown moustache had been shaved off, and his hair shorn ridiculously close. He was clothed in a coarse prison attire of blue woollen, on which were sewn the three enigmatical letters F.N.L., signifying, ‘First offence—no labour;’ yet he had been daily

compelled, under the threat of bread and water, to clean his cell, make his own bed, and so forth; though no threats were necessary, as the gentle fellow meekly obeyed every rule, even to eating his humble food with a wooden spoon—the use of knives and forks being denied him.

A horrible sense of the unreality of his present life haunted Tom, till he feared at times that insanity might supervene. Where was he now? Where was his past existence? where Mabel? where his daily office routine? Was he actually sinking into that character for which they had weighed, shaved, shorn, and attired him?

Tom cared little for his own future, and scarcely felt or cared for the disgrace of the allegation against him. All minor emotions were merged and forgotten in his woe and affliction for Mabel, and all that she must suffer and endure alone in that dull boarding-house, every detail of which was photographed on his mind, and which he knew not as yet that she had quitted.

Mab—his own darling Mab; it was her *nom de caresse* now. But to return to her.

At the grating beyond that which barred her farther progress, in the gray uncertain light, she suddenly saw an apparition appear, the bearing of Tom, yet was otherwise every way unlike him—shaved, shorn, attired in prison blue, and looking pale and wan.

‘Mabel—Mabel!’ he exclaimed.

‘O God! Tom—Tom—Tom!’ she wailed out; and then the young husband and wife involuntarily thrust their arms towards each other through the iron gratings, and Mabel beat her tender breast upon the bars in the veriest despair, while she became so blinded by the gush and the bitterness of her tears that the blurred outline of him she had come to see became quite indistinct. She could hear his voice, but could scarcely understand what he was saying to her.

Then, after a time, she became aware of the presence of the sentinel-warder, midway between the gratings, who sat stolidly looking at her; he was too well used to meetings such

as these to feel the slightest interest in them, though they might tickle his sense of humour at times.

Tom was begging and praying her to abstain from visiting him in a place and under circumstances that must harrow all her better and tender feelings, that though he loved her beyond the breath that was in his nostrils he would rather not see her there, as he could always hear of her through Mr. Skeemes, who had access to him at all times.

She wiped her tears that she might see him she loved clearly and steadily ; and Tom looked wistfully into her face—that soft, fair, and exquisite English face, so beautiful even then at that dire, dire moment, filled with the sudden brightness and gladness of divine hope, and the trust, as she assured him, that all would yet be well with them, for they had done no wrong, save her disobedience to her parents. Mr. Skeemes, she added, had come to the conviction that Foxley, and no other, was the perpetrator of the crime, and means would be taken to unmask him.

It never occurred to Mabel that he might have concealed, destroyed, or put the notes in circulation, or that he might be—as he actually was at that time—on the Continent, and hidden beyond the reach even of extradition laws; for the gentle girl had all that sublime hope in the future and that earnest piety which form the best ‘of the sevenfold gifts of the Spirit of God.’

He then asked her if she had heard aught of her father and mother.

‘Alas, no, Tom,’ she replied, clasping her hands, at that time ignorant of the former’s visit, of the fever of his mind, and that she had gone from Harley Street without leaving any address.

Tom was about to speak again, when the Cerberus in the blue surtout posted between the gratings suddenly produced a huge metal watch, and bluntly announcing that time was ‘up,’ warned her to be gone, and Tom to retire; so husband and wife could but exchange one more despairing glance, stretch out their trembling hands towards each other, and separate.

Again there was a dreadful clanging of bolts and bars, a rattling of chains, and Mabel, as one still in a dreadful dream, found herself once more in the busy human sea that surged around the prison-walls.

In her loneliness and misery, Mabel had thought many times of casting herself on the mercy of her parents; but she had a terror of her mother's reproaches and of the dreadful epithets she would be sure now to hurl against Tom in the hour of his humiliation; besides, she, in her ignorance of the world and of life, had a fear that if they sought to serve him by means of their wealth and influence, the price of it might be her separation from him for ever. Yet if Tom was to be defended when the time of trial came, money was most necessary; and whence was it to come?

But for the lack of it he might be found guilty, and then—oh, no, no! God could not be so cruel! So she thrust the idea from her; but it would recur to her stingingly, again and again.

It was well for Mabel, as full of thought

she walked slowly and dreamily homeward to the humble lodging she had selected, that she knew not the state of mind in which she left Tom Seymour. Instead of soothing him, the sight of Mabel, her tears and the piteous sound of her voice, had inspired him with a species of frenzy.

She was scarcely gone ere he returned and shrieked her name aloud. He dashed himself, again and again, upon the solid iron grating; he grasped the bars like a madman, and shook them till, massive as they were, they actually rattled in their sockets; but they mocked his feeble strength. He then flung himself against the solid walls; and in his fury might have done himself some serious injury, had not half a dozen strong warders borne him off by main strength to his cell and flung him on his pallet, where, after the paroxysm passed away, he wrung his hands and wept like a child.

CHAPTER IV.

SORROW AND JOY.

DAILY Mabel haunted the vicinity of the prison, till she knew every stone in the abhorred walls, every rusty bar in its grimy little windows of fluted glass, and more than once was somewhat roughly and suspiciously questioned by the watchful police as to her purpose in loitering there, till she became terrified, and when she was without permission to visit Tom could only watch his dreary abode from a distance.

Daily also was she at the dingy little office of Mr. Skeemes, to learn what progress was being made in the preparation for Tom's defence, for evidence in the matter of Foxley's visit, and the prospect of Tom being speedily tried—and if his prosecution was to be conducted by the Treasury.

‘O Heavens!’ thought she; ‘my slender

purse against the Treasury!' and the girl's soul would seem to die away within her. But when questioned by her—tearfully, nervously, and while growing haggard with anxiety—the tiresome lawyer would wrap himself up in mystery, pull his nether lip, as if full of grave doubts, use a jargon of horrible legal phrases of which she could make nothing, and, save a few dry commonplaces, nothing ever fell from him to soothe the beating heart of her who hung in agony on his measured and monotonous accents.

At last the poor girl learned, with a thrill in which hope and horror were blended, that the day for Tom's trial was FIXED, and that an able counsel for the defence would be wanted. On obtaining these tidings, when she returned to her lodging, in a humble, gloomy, and very dirty alley, she looked so crushed in spirit, so wan in face, so ill and feverish in spirit, that even her landlady, a struggling woman, accustomed ever and always to look at the darker side of life, was sorrowful for the stricken creature, though she seemed to take misfor-

tune, and even shame, but as the component parts of the hard game of existence.

‘If she is hill,’ Mabel overheard her say to a neighbour, over a cup of tea that never saw China, sweetened with sugar that was half Derbyshire white, ‘I ’opes it ain’t with anything catching; if so, to a ’ospital she must go, as I can’t keep her on all I am likely to get from her ’usband, or the man she calls sich. I can’t make her out at all, ma’m; her hands is so white and delicat. She has never done no work, even needlework, for there ain’t no marks in her forefinger.’

To have such things said to or of her, the pride of Thaneshurst, the once pet of her father and joy of his life!

With Tom’s arrest, of course, his salary ceased; and save the contents of her trunk Mabel’s means of subsistence were gone. Thus, one by one, the few jewels and birthday presents she had brought from home with her, or acquired since out of Tom’s limited means, were parted with to jewellers in the Strand, and once more the weary pil-

grimaces were resumed among the picture-dealers and music-shops—the former to seek sale for the drawings, the latter to obtain employment, even to play at balls and parties; but of this last she had less hope than ever now. A married woman! Where was her husband? She dared not say in prison, awaiting his trial for embezzling public money. While her attire was daily becoming more sordid, even the neat paper-cuffs and collars with which—to wear real linen had become too expensive—the poor girl sought to set off her turned silk dress, had to be relinquished, and the pretty figure did then begin to look so dark and dingy.

Times there were when she thought all this must be portion of a punishment put upon her for acting ungratefully to her parents, and abandoning them for the love of Tom. But Tom was so tender and true, so loving to her, that surely they—even her mamma, so pitilessly harsh and stern—would relent.

She felt herself, under this daily and nightly load of galling anxiety, growing

feeble, she knew not exactly how. She had headaches, dimness of eyesight, and a tendency to faint. The cheap and dubious medicines she got from a shabby apothecary's shop at the street-corner failed to benefit her, and dreadful were the fears at times that came over her, lest she should actually become ill—for she remembered the words of the landlady—and be removed to some hospital, where she might die without seeing Tom again; and of such places she had only vague horrors associated with suffering, death, coroners' inquests, dissections, and experimenting students—'sprigs of anatomy, plaster, and pill.'

And she shuddered at her own thoughts. Every visit she paid Tom was but a wild repetition of the first, and the excitement of these increased as the day of trial drew near.

Her girlish bloom was gone now, and much of her rose-beauty had faded away; hence, when on her sad and hopeless errands, though many men noticed, none addressed or molested

her, she looked so modest, humble, and yet so ladylike, albeit she was so poorly attired.

She became morbid at last, by brooding and loneliness. Thus once, on seeing Milly Allingham and her mamma bowling along Oxford Street in a well-hung carriage, a little cry as of fear escaped her, lest she should be seen by them so shabbily attired, and she shrunk aside into the porch of the Soho Bazaar, and lingered there irresolutely, till the stern and inquiring eye of the porter, who saw that she had evidently no intention of becoming a purchaser, drove her once more into the crowded street. But she acted most unwisely in thus studiously avoiding the generous Milly—the one link between her and those at Thaneshurst.

At this—to her most critical—juncture a Bermuda letter came from Rowland Stanley, enclosing a draft on his London bankers for a good round sum, saying, it was a small present for the little one, whose birth he had seen in the papers (but of whose death he happened to be ignorant); and Mabel wept

as she kissed and placed in her breast the letter of the generous soldier who was her husband's faithful friend, and who thus furnished the means for his defence, in blessed ignorance that it was required for such a purpose.

For the first time after this event Tom and Mabel talked with something like coherence through the odious double gratings that separated them.

'O Mabel,' said he, 'what a difference there is between having a heavy heart and a light pocket, a heavy pocket and a light heart, in this world! God bless Stanley for all his kindness!'

She could only weep.

'How shall I ever repay him!' added Tom. 'You must write to him, darling—for, you know, I cannot.'

And Mabel after some days wrote; but too late, for when her letter reached Bermuda H.M.'s gallant —th regiment was sailing on the sea. To the luckless, the unfortunate, and the crushed there can be no happier tempera-

ment than one that builds *châteaux en Espagne*. It may be dreamy, vain, and speculative, but not quite useless, as it is based on the sweet sentiment of *hope*, after all. So Tom built his castles nobly for a time; but another time came, when those airy creations—too often the last resource of the miserable—ceased to interest him or the poor little wife, whose faded face could no longer nestle in his neck.

He had now, he knew, the stern and degrading anxieties of his trial to face; and Heaven alone could foresee whether he should come off triumphant, or be hurled still farther and more hopelessly than ever down the ladder of social life.

And now to turn to a brighter picture.

Great joy was Milly's now; her reconciliation with Stanley had lifted an incubus off her heart.

'O mamma,' said she, as they drove westward, 'do you know, I thought I saw the face of Mabel Brooke just now in Oxford Street. If 'twas she, how pale and worn she

looked! Perhaps I was mistaken, and I hope so.'

'A naughty, foolish, and worse than foolish girl,' responded Mrs. Allingham; 'don't talk of her.'

'O mamma!' urged Milly, as at the foot of Park Lane the coachman checked his horses, and looked round inquiringly.

'Once round by the Row, and then home, to be in time for afternoon tea,' said Mrs. Allingham; and so her handsome carriage swept round by the noble equestrian promenade which is adjacent to those hideous barracks at Knightsbridge, and is, as most people in cockneydom know, a corruption of the *Route du Roi* of England's Norman kings, and from which people were whilom debarred when the surly William of Orange—he of the pious, glorious, and immortal memory—attended by only some Dutch favourites and his one-eyed mistress, the ugly Elizabeth Vilars, Countess of Orkney, were wont to ride in solemn state, escorted by Count Solms's Blues, the Dutch Life-guards whom he adored.

All was dull and silent in the Row at this season and on that day, as if those old times had come again; but Milly Allingham was in the highest spirits, nathless the little pale face that haunted her. Mabel had thought her friend—as the carriage swept past—looking more beautiful, and certainly more radiant, than ever; and, indeed, she was in such a flow of spirits as puzzled her mamma, who was as yet totally ignorant of her engagement to Stanley (whose letters were all that Milly could have desired), till one day the bewildered old lady had put into her hand an enclosure for her daughter in a strange handwriting.

It bore the Bermuda postmark, and on the envelope, in radiant blue, red, and gold, were the number of a regiment, with the royal cipher and crown.

‘For me, mamma?’ said Milly, colouring deeply.

‘*What* is this? and *who* is your correspondent now?’ asked Mrs. Allingham severely.

‘Don’t say *now*, mamma; that is too se-

vere,' said Milly, her colour deepening, as they sat in the exquisitely furnished boudoir in Connaught Place—where the fragrance of the sweet-peas and of the mignonette came in together from the jardinière at the open windows facing the Park—and when she threw her arms round her startled mother's neck—startled all the more because such exhibitions were unusual in the rather placid Milly—and said, 'Forgive me, darling mamma; but I am solemnly engaged—'

'To whom—to whom?'

'Captain Stanley—Rowland Stanley. You must remember him last season, mamma.'

Mrs. Allingham did remember him, and had liked him immensely—the cunning fellow had ever been so attentive to herself.

'But this announcement is somewhat sudden,' she said, with perfectly pardonable severity. 'You are a second Mabel Brooke, or Seymour, or whatever she calls herself now. Surely I, your mother, should have been consulted in a matter of so much importance as your marriage—your settlement in life.'

Nestling her face in the plump white neck of the old lady (for her mamma was still handsome, and no one would have guessed her real age), with an arm thrown around her, and with all that caressing and endearing manner of which Miss Mildred Stanhope Al-lingham was perfectly mistress, she then told her mamma much of which that good lady had been quite ignorant: her two proposals—one made in the next drawing-room, the other at Thaneshurst—and the final and fatal, though petty, affair of the flower at Brighton, and the horror of the subsequent shipwreck.

‘Who could think,’ she added plaintively, ‘that so much of fate, so much of sorrow and of joy, could be bound up in the petals of a white camellia? It is quite like some of Mudie’s stories, or those people who write for Mudie. And, O mamma, but for Rowland’s suspicion, haste, and impetuosity on that night, three words would have explained all; all would have been well, and many a bitter tear shed, unknown to you, when I was alone,

especially in the silence of night, had never, never been; and our hearts had never been so nearly broken—if hearts do really break,’ she added, with a coy and covert smile.

‘But you should have told and trusted *me*,’ persisted the old lady.

‘I meant to let Rowland do so, mamma,’ urged the winning delinquent.

That the hitherto butterfly existence of her daughter was, too probably, now approaching its termination gave Mrs. Allingham occasion for much thought and reflection; and so far as family, position, means, and general character went, Stanley she knew to be every way, as her French maid would have expressed it, *un parti* that was unexceptionable.

After many questions asked and answers given, with long pauses full of natural thought between—for in this instance mother and daughter were most tenderly attached—Mrs. Allingham said,

‘O my Milly, how can I ever make up my mind to lose you!’

‘But you shall not lose me, dearest mamma.’

‘With a husband whose regiment—’

‘He will leave that, I know. We shall have a nice house in Sussex Gardens, or some such quiet place; and you will live with us, mamma; and, oh, we shall be so happy together, you dear, dear old thing!’

Then the old lady’s fine clear eyes filled with tears as she caressed her winning and beautiful daughter, and said,

‘I always liked Rowland Stanley, Milly.’

‘So glad of that, darling; he is the dearest fellow in the world; but, O mamma, I used him shamefully!’

‘You have used a good many so, I fear. There was,’ began the old lady, counting on her white but now wrinkled fingers, ‘the Hon. Mr. Hampton, from whom you took a ring, and then returned it next day.’

‘He quarrelled with me because I happened to ride along the Uxbridge Road with the Master of Badenoch, when the Hussars were at Hounslow, and who was going the

same way. Oh, *his* jealousy was quite intolerable!

‘Then there was Val Reynolds.’

‘Nonsense, mamma; he never proposed.’

‘Next there was Sir Henry.’

‘Old Sir Henry was always too good and proper for me—always considered me giddy and undignified; I was so glad to be rid of him. But please, mamma, do not enumerate all the bores who have bored me.’

‘When is the —th Regiment expected home?’

‘In Europe very, very soon.’

‘All the better for Captain Stanley’s sake,’ said Mrs. Allingham, laughing.

‘O mamma, don’t quiz me. You do not know how truly good, tender, and true our Rowland is—for he is *ours*, you know, mamma,’ added the girl, her dark eyes full of tears; ‘and do think,’ she added, with much of her old coquetry, ‘that a man’s pride is, or ought to be, flattered by witnessing the world’s appreciation of his choice.’

And in girlish glee her Maltese terrier, a

snow-white cur presented to her by Stanley, was tossed up and kissed again and again, for the donor's sake. How well she remembered the day when he bought it for her in Leadenhall Market, and the fun they had while the carriage waited for them in Gracechurch Street!

But, to do her justice, in the brilliance of her joy Milly had but one sensation of oppression—the fate and misfortunes of the unhappy Seymours. She knew nothing of Mr. Skeemes, and thus could nowhere discover Mabel's address, as at Harley Street all trace of her had been lost. Occasionally she thought of advertising in the *Times*; but remembering how the 'agony-column' thereof was alternately a source of curiosity and contempt, she shrank from the idea, as being unladylike. So day followed day; the Brookes secluded themselves at Thaneshurst; Mabel's name was ignored in their letters; and Milly, in her kindness of heart, watched unwearingly the human tides that passed on each side of the carriage for the sweet face of her she loved so well; but watched in vain.

CHAPTER V.

ADIEU, BERMUDA!

AT the very time the interview we have narrated was taking place in that pretty boudoir in Connaught Place between Milly Allingham and her mother, a large steam transport, with H.M.'s —th on board, was slowly getting out of Grassy Bay, and from the deck the soldiers were waving their farewell cheers to those by whom they had been relieved, and were gathered in crowds responding, yet watching the lessening ship; from the dockyard in Ireland Island. They soon melted away from sight, and then the rocky and conical hills of the sunny isles began to sink into the evening sea astern.

Stanley's regiment had been ordered to Gibraltar; and all the important business of seeing that each soldier had one bag in lieu of

a haversack, a half-pound of soap, one tintot, and a half-pound of tobacco—in all, value 3s. 5½*d.*, *most generous* John Bull!—was over.

The evening was a lovely and auspicious one, shedding a long line of light along the rippling path the ship had to traverse; the moon rose into the starry sky without a cloud, and, as all on board remarked with pleasure, without a vestige of that luminous halo, or circle, which in those regions is always the precursor of a storm, and often of a hurricane.

Nearly all the regimental officers were on deck, chiefly aft; thus a heavy odour of cigars and meerschaums was on the air. All were gay and in the highest spirits; so chaff and banter—in all instances not restrained even by the presence of a few married ladies, shawled and cloaked—were in full swing; and forward, the cheery voices of the soldiers, with often a chorus or two, stole out upon the night, for the tattoo-drum had not been beaten, warning all, save the watch, to go below and turn in.

‘Well, Neddy,’ said Joe Trevor, a young sub., who ‘went in’ for being regimental fun-

maker, 'how did you like the text of the chaplain's farewell sermon yesterday?'

' "All flesh is grass"—very well.'

' Ah, it made you think of the little grass widow at Hampton—eh?'

Knollys put his arm through Stanley's arm, and turned angrily on his heel towards the taffrail; and more angry might he have been with Master Joe Trevor, but it so chanced that on this evening, save Stanley's, there was no heart so light in all the crowded ship as his; for two days before the departure of the regiment the last mail from England had brought him a black-edged, highly embossed, and every way most impressive card: 'In Memoriam — Colonel John Hippisley, K.C.B., who departed this life at his mansion of the Chestnuts, near Hampton Court,' &c.; and of this important piece of pasteboard Stanley had instantly been made cognisant; so he ordered a bottle of champagne from the mess-house, to sustain Neddy under the effects of this second demise of his cousin's *caro sposo*.

So the brilliant Kate was a widow in earnest *again*, as Paddy might say, and there would be no more returning from the other world, to all appearance, as upon that exciting moonlight night in the arbour.

‘Trevor—how the devil has he got hold of the story ! Little knows he, Rowland, what the affair he jests of cost me,’ said Knollys ; ‘but I am sure that, as some fellow says,

“ ’Tis better to have loved and lost
Than never to have loved at all.” ’

‘Yes, but more especially, Neddy, when you go on loving the girl with the assurance that she loves you ; but,’ added Stanley, laughing, ‘you’ll have to make sure this time—see even his tombstone.’

‘Won’t I, by Jove!’ replied Knollys, in the same tone. ‘I’ll search the register like a lawyer—see even the undertaker’s receipt. As for a tombstone, that is nothing ; I believe the old fellow quite capable of putting up one to himself, don’t you know.’

Perhaps this was scarcely the kind of manner to adopt ; but then it must be borne in

mind that Knollys was young and heedless, and considered that the late gallant colonel had acted most improperly to his cousin and himself by the eccentric prank he had so skilfully played them.

‘Make sure!’ he said, after a time; ‘I rather think I shall. Poor darling Kate, how much *she* must have endured all this time!’

‘You have been in general jolly enough, my friend, seeking “the bubble reputation,” and not always at the cannon’s mouth.’

‘At a mouth more pleasant perhaps; but you know, Stanley, that yonder among the demi-semi-coloured lot in “vexed Bermoothes” we are apt to forget—’

‘Especially in private theatricals and fancy-balls.’

‘Exactly who are married and who are not. The route came just in time to save Trevor and some more of us from coming to grief. And now we are off for home,’ exclaimed Knollys, but added, a little pathetically, ‘I say *home*, though I have none but where the regimental colours are. The corps

has been my happy movable home since infancy, for I was, as you know, born in it, like my father and grandfather; and the services of the last go back to the wars of Cornwallis and the fall of York Town. That wasn't yesterday, old fellow. So I have no other home than the regiment, God bless me, unless—unless—'

‘What?’

‘My cousin Kate, now that she is a widow, marries me,’ he added, with such simplicity that Stanley burst into a fit of laughter, and said,

‘Can you doubt it?’

‘Not for a second,’ replied the other, twirling his smart brown moustache into spiky points. ‘Off at last for England—or Gib.; it is nearly all one now; they are only a week's run, or less, apart. By Jove, Rowland, I have never been so happy since I was appointed, and the circulars of the military snips came pouring in, to the disgust of the governor, but the joy of my mother and my sisters, who thought that in a forage-cap and tight shell-

jacket I should look like Mars or Hector. Indeed, I had but few doubts on that subject myself.'

While Neddy Knollys, in his unwonted flow of spirits, ran on thus by the side of Stanley, the latter—more like a sailor than a soldier at sea—was pacing steadily up and down, doing the Dutchman's walk of 'three steps and overboard,' a practice men acquire on long voyages, and he had performed many; he thinking of the mood of mind in which he last crossed that world of waters, and the change that Milly's letter had wrought upon him, and feeling now that to look forward to the future was to have the heart filled indeed with the light and joy of hope. Stanley and Knollys had become as confidential to each other on the subject of their loves as two schoolboys, and the latter knew all ere long about Milly and her letters, as if he had known her since she was in short frocks. In their jollity they tossed up for who was to enact the part of groomsman to the other, and Neddy won the post.

But, like the Irish Gil Blas, 'his mind had laid up so many texts for adventurous fancies, that on the slightest pretext he could call up any quantity for enterprises and vicissitudes.'

The steamer sped fast into other latitudes and longitudes, far northward and eastward of the Bermudas. The voyage was prosperous, and varied only by the really trivial events that prove such excitement at sea, and the fulfilment of her Majesty's instructions for troops when on board ship,—the parades on deck, the clean-shirt days, the messing, and change of the watches and quarter-guard; the bedding, fumigation, and ventilation below; the state of the well and of the orlop deck; all of which were duly and daily reported on in writing to the colonel by the captain and subaltern of the day,—till one fine morning when the look-out man at the mainmast head announced 'Land on the starboard bow!' and every soldier and sailor came swarming up from below to see a low stripe rising from the sea; and that stripe proved to be—for the *Madeiras* had long since disappeared upon the

port-quarter—Cape Blanco, the most western point of the vast continent of Africa.

Every glass was soon brought to bear upon it, and a few hours' further run showed it to be a high white cliff, rising with a gentle slope from the water-edge ; but it melted away astern as the transport hauled up for the Gut of Gibraltar and the point of Tangiers, which were more than two hundred miles distant. But already the cheerful voices of the deck-watch, sailors and soldiers mingled, were heard on the forecastle, where, under one of the mates, the 'ground tackle' was got ready, the rattling chain-cable laid in 'French fake' along the deck, and the ponderous anchors were raised over the bows to dangle at the cat-heads.

Ere long the peculiar outline of old Gib., like a couchant lion, was seen rising from the sea on the starboard bow ; and a few hours after, the mighty batteries, the lines of caverns with their round black portholes hewn through the solid rock, and all the details of that wonderful fortress, became distinct to the eye.

Stanley and others of the regiment had seen Gibraltar twice before, when going to and returning from India; consequently it was scarcely a source of excitement to him or them. But none of them had ever approached it from the south-western portion of the Atlantic, the point whence can be seen the vast promontory, running into the sea for several miles from the continent of Spain, with which it is connected by a low sandy isthmus, doubtless once covered by the ocean, from which the rock starts abruptly upward to the height of thirteen hundred feet. There the sea-birds and the wild hawks wheel and scream amid the boom of the white breakers; there the olive, the cacti, and the caper plant grow in the clefts of the cliff, and there the wild apes scamper to and fro. On the other side, at the foot, lies the town, and high over it, tier on tier, the most tremendous fortifications in the world; and there can be heard the British drum and the Scottish bagpipe, daily waking the echoes of the same rocks where the warriors of Tarik the Moor sounded their

timbrels and sent up their war-cries in the eighth century.

Stanley's regiment bore on its colours *Montis Insignia Calpe*, with the Castle and Key; for it had served in the famous three years' siege under stout old General Eliott, and was engaged in the great sortie on that terrible night, the 26th November 1781, when the countersign was 'Steady,' and the supports were led by Picton—the gallant Picton of the wars of future years.

And Stanley thought of the lines, as the great screw-propeller drew nearer and nearer the scene of his destination :

'Through Calpe's straits survey the steepy shore—

Europe and Afric on each other gaze !

Lands of the dark-eyed maid and dusky Moor

Alike beheld beneath pale Hecate's blaze.

How softly on the Spanish shore she plays,

Disclosing the rock and slope and forest brown,

Distinct, though darkening with her waning phase ;

But Mauritania's giant shadows frown

From mountain cliff to coast descending sombre brown.'

'I wonder what we Englishmen or Scotchmen would think,' said Knollys, 'if we saw a

fortress such as this tenanted by Spaniards or Frenchmen, looking down from the cliffs of Dover or on the Firth of Forth.'

'In either case it would cut off nothing,' said Stanley.

'How so?'

'Because Gibraltar most effectually cuts off all communication by sea between that part of Spain which is bounded by the Mediterranean and that portion which is bordered by the Atlantic; and by its heavy guns, even in these days of steam, it effectually bars the passage of the strait against the world; so those cosmopolitans who urge its surrender are either fools or knaves, or both.'

At last the anchors were let go with a mighty plunge; the cables rushed through iron hawse-pipes with a sullen roar, the canvas was hauled up, the light evening breeze swept through the rigging, and the transport swung at her moorings under the dark shadow of the mighty rock.

The Custom-house authorities came, of course, on board; then the staff and medical

officers, to ascertain the actual state of the troops on board, what casualties had occurred on the voyage, and many other matters of routine.

Amid all this Stanley had but one thought. Was a letter from Milly awaiting him in yonder tremendous fortress that overhung the sea?

The next day's early dawn saw all our 'gallant friends' ashore, and marching into the garrison by the *Mouth of Fire*, as the entrance is named by the Spaniards, so formidable is the appearance exhibited by the ordnance on the lines, on the grand battery and the old mole. Then the corps they had come to relieve, like themselves, were all in heavy marching order, departing to embark; and then, amid the mingled crash of two strong regimental bands, ensued one of those striking scenes which spring from the chivalrous etiquette of military life.

The departing regiment, being a junior one, was formed in two ranks, facing inwards, with presented arms, the colours flying, the

officers in front saluting; while Stanley's corps marched between these in sections, also with colours flying, but arms carried. Then the ranks were closed, a farewell cheer exchanged, and the departing regiment resumed its march, to embark for Malta.

Stanley and his friend Knollys were both in a fever of impatience, till they were duly rewarded by the arrival of the letters for the regiment; and the same tall bugle-major who brought the former Milly's welcome letter at Bermuda again, *ex officio*, brought him another at old Gib., together with a little packet—'that angel of a bugle-major!' as Neddy called him in fervour, as the stolid non-commissioned officer had something pleasant for him (postmark—Hampton Court). But Stanley's packet—what might it contain?

He was not long in discovering. A delicately but magnificently coloured photo—the best that Regent Street could produce—of Milly herself, in a blue-velvet case.

Long and ardently did he gaze upon it, again and again. How the eyes seemed to

smile—and on *him*—the sweet lips to move, the soft features to become instinct with subtle life! How often had he seen her posed thus, look thus, and with her hair thus dressed! It was Milly Allingham—his own Milly to be—to the very life. No artist's eye or hand could have produced the exquisite and perfect proportion of feature and of form given to this delicately tinted sun-picture.

Neither of our enamoured friends at Gibraltar could, as yet, obtain leave of absence, even between returns—*i.e.* for a month—so many seniors had applied for the same, and had of course priority; so they were compelled, as Knollys said, 'to kick their heels in Gibraltar, and cultivate the art of patience.'

Young men soon use up all the amusements of such a place as Gibraltar when a strong garrison occupy a space so circumscribed. Balls, parties, amateur theatricals, and some very break-neck hunting over stony and marvellous ground were all resorted to by them to kill the time, and a very short

period sufficed them to 'do' all the rock, and even a portion of Andalusia when leave could be had to cross the lines of the jealous Spaniards at San Roque; and in anticipation of their meeting, many a sketch Stanley made for Milly of views from 'the lightning-riven tower of O'Hara' of the opposite continent, where rise the other Pillar of Hercules and the dark cliffs of Mount Abyla, the deep bay of Tetuan, and the snow-covered chain of Mount Atlas, stretching in dim perspective far away; or on other points, where rose the mountain coast of Marbella and Estepona, and the masses of the Serrania de Ronda aspiring to heaven.

What joy he should feel when hanging over Milly and describing to her all these places and the old Moorish tower of the Caliph Walid, which, like a war-worn sentinel, seems to guard the gloomy gorge that leads into the bosom of the rocky mountain!

He often wandered alone in those galleries or natural casemates hewn in the living rock, and through the portholes of which there

steals a dubious light on heavy ordnance, on piles of balls and bombs. There would he linger for many an hour, listening to the music of breakers far down below, or the shrill voices from the town borne upward on the ambient air, and think how delighted he should be were *she* but with him there, to watch the ships, often passing out of the straits before a stiff Levanter, and seeming to fly as they carried the sea and wind alike with them.

He had sent Milly a bracelet of Gibraltar stones, set in gold by the best jeweller in the town, and he had dutifully written to her mother, saying all that was necessary, referring her to his lawyers, and so forth—for even in the affairs of love must these cold-blooded functionaries interfere at times—and urging that Milly might be his wife before the year closed in, adding that if leave were delayed him, he should certainly send in his papers and sell out.

With such a correspondence as this on hand, the periodical arrival of the English

mail was a source of endless interest; and between these and the intervals of military duty he could but kill time in the ways described, or wander in the Alameda, that beautiful square esplanade which rises above the batteries, and is shaded by trees, and where, like all the other young fellows in the garrison, he knew every pretty girl—at least by sight—English, Spanish, and Jewish.

At last, to the sore perplexity of Stanley, *three* successive mails arrived without a single letter for him from either Mrs. Allingham or Milly, and he grew feverish with impatience, anxiety, and even fear.

Had she changed her mind again? Had other or more brilliant prospects come before her? Was illness the cause of her silence? A thousand things he thought of to torment himself, and a thousand more.

He telegraphed to Connaught Place in London, but received no reply. This still further increased his bewilderment. After a time he learned that a letter addressed to him by Mrs. Allingham had miscarried—a letter

that would have explained all he could have wished to learn, and the cause of the mysterious silence, the reason of which was simply this—that she and Milly were sailing on the *sea*.

CHAPTER VI.

MR. WILLIAM WEAZLE.

HEEDLESS of the grief and horror he had brought among his family circle at home, and half oblivious of the danger accruing to himself by the sudden manner in which he had been tempted to indulge his spirit of treachery and revenge, Alf Foxley was now at that most dissipated of all the German spas, Homburg, enjoying all the luxuries afforded by the Hôtel d'Angleterre, refreshing his inward man by copious matutinal draughts of the Stahl Brunnen, and having nightly the run of the ball, dining, coffee, and smoking rooms of the splendid Kurhaus, together with more than one rather disreputable flirtation in the beautiful gardens and pleasure-grounds attached to the Schloss of Hesse Homburg, or having evening rides in the long avenue of stately Lombardy poplars ; while at this time his

uncle and aunt supposed him to be idling in London.

It was one of those hot and breathless days that are among the last of summer. All the country—tree, wood, and wold—around Thaneshurst seemed to quiver and vibrate in the breathless sunshine, and swarms of little flies and gnats were dancing in the air—when the panting cattle chew the cud under the shadiest oaks and beeches, and the careful driver takes his horses through every pond or running stream, to freshen them up a little.

Breakfast was over, and Mr. and Mrs. Brooke were seated together in the morning-room, but in silence, for the *one* solitary topic on which they cared to converse had been worn utterly threadbare now.

Mr. Brooke had advertised again and again in the second column of the *Times* for Mabel, under the initials 'M. B., now M. S.,' but without success; for no answer or response ever came, for Mabel never saw that paper now; and Milly Allingham, who knew

but too surely to *whom* the initials referred, was filled by them with affectionate sorrow and alarm.

The two old people sat in silence, Mrs. Brooke idly rolling and unrolling her table-napkin, scarcely conscious of what she was doing; and Mr. Brooke, a man of one sorrowful thought, was brooding, as he always brooded now; his ample chin, or succession of chins, now become more thin and pendulous, sunk on his breast, his fingers interlaced before him, and his thumbs revolving over each other in succession. His eyes were fixed on the distant landscape, but vacantly, for he neither saw nor heeded it.

At this time a violent peal of the bell, the great handle of which hung in the *porte-cochère*, resounded through the whole house, and made Mr. and Mrs. Brooke start from their mutual reverie to gaze at each other inquiringly. No visitor, having a view to propriety or etiquette, ever called at such an early hour, either in town or country; so *who* could the arrival be?

Mr. Mulbery, with a slightly indignant expression of countenance, appeared with a card on a salver, preceding a mean-looking little man,—plainly but respectably dressed, quiet in bearing, keen and watchful, rapid yet unobtrusive in manner,—who entered the room, with his hat in one hand, his other occupied in smoothing down his stiff grizzled hair, while he smiled and bowed alternately to the host and hostess.

Mr. Brooke took up the card as Mulbery withdrew, and read thereon, ‘MR. WILLIAM WEAZLE.’

‘May I ask you—but pray, first be seated—what obtains me the pleasure of this visit?’ asked Mr. Brooke.

‘You may, sir,’ replied Mr. Weazle, with a grin, which, however, instantly subsided; while Mrs. Brooke glanced haughtily and inquiringly at their visitor, who sat uneasily on the extreme edge of his chair, with his hat on his knees—‘you may, sir,’ he repeated. ‘I am a detective officer from Scotland Yard.’

‘Will you leave us for a little time, Martha dear?’ asked Mr. Brooke; on which she rose, and haughtily, yet with a heart wrung by disgrace and rage, left the room. ‘And now,’ said the old gentleman, ‘may I inquire what your business can be with me?’

‘It is a very unpleasant one, sir,’ said Mr. Weazle, who was certainly rather impressed by the whole aspect of Thaneshurst, and the solid evidence of wealth, luxury, and splendour by which he was surrounded; yet there were alternations of coolness, fidgets, sarcasm, and *insouciance* in the bearing of this underbred visitor as he gathered confidence, that angered even the easy-going Mr. Brooke, who said rather sharply,

‘Will you come to the point, sir?’

‘You must excuse me, in the execution of my dooty, asking a few questions.’

‘Certainly.’

‘You have a nephew, sir?’

‘Yes—Mr. Alfred Foxley.’

‘Where is he at this time?’

‘I do not know—in town; at his club most probably.’

‘No, sir; he is not at his club.’

‘How do you know?’ asked Mr. Brooke, with irritation and vague uneasiness of manner—a fear in his heart that something more was hanging over them all.

‘Letters for him have been lying there for ever so long, and no one knows where to send them to.’

‘Why?’

‘He is supposed to be across the briny,’ replied Mr. Weazle, winking.

‘The what?’ asked Mr. Brooke sharply.

‘The sea, sir.’

‘For what reason?’

‘The wery identical reason as brought me down here.’

‘And that is—’

‘His supposed implication in the matter of them missing bank-notes.’

‘God bless my soul! Do you say so?’

‘More than say so; I think so. Mr. Seymour admitted, reluctantly I must say, that

on the day the money was missed he was visited by your nephew—the man in the gray-coloured dust-coat ; and I have come, with your permission, to search his room or rooms for anything that may bear evidence or throw light on this matter. It is all in the execution of my dooty, sir.’

‘Certainly, certainly,’ replied Mr. Brooke, who rang for the butler with unconcealed agitation of manner. In all his long experience of life he had been unused to visitors and humiliations of this kind. ‘Mr. Mulbery,’ said he, on the appearance of that personage, ‘take this gentleman to Mr. Foxley’s rooms; he wishes to take some note of them.’

They retired together, and Mr. Brooke uttered a sigh of impatience rather than relief; and sinking back in his chair, and gazing at the ceiling, alternately stern and stolid to all appearance, then restless and fidgety, and deeming, like Mrs. Brooke, that Mr. Weazle’s visit was but one chapter more in the awful story, one act more in the drama, of disgrace in which they had so suddenly become involved.

As may be supposed, the bedroom and 'snuggery' of Alf Foxley were furnished with every luxury necessary to bachelorhood. The detective, after scanning the exquisite toilette-table in the dressing-room, the mantelpiece littered with pipes, notes, odds and ends of cigars, cartes of Aimée in every species of costume and variety of pose, turned his attention to the chest of drawers and wardrobe, with its plate-mirror panelling. All were securely locked, but Mr. Weazle thought nothing of that; and simply requesting that a smith should be sent for from the village, seated himself in Alf's easy-chair with the air of a man who made himself thoroughly at home everywhere. He then made some remarks upon the heat of the weather, and its consequent provocation to thirst.

The butler was not slow in taking the hint, and speedily produced a decanter and couple of glasses on a silver tray. He filled up the latter, and Mr. Weazle sniffed, sipped the wine, and then eyed it between him and the light with the would-be air of a connoisseur.

‘Mr. Bulbery,’ he began.

‘Mulbery, sir.’

‘Well, there ain’t much difference, is there?’

‘The difference of a B and a Hem,’ replied Mulbery coldly.

‘Well, what do you call this—cream o’ the walley, I suppose? Another glass, please.’

‘We calls it burgandy, sir.’

‘Oh, burgandy.’

‘It is not exactly the wine for this hour of the day; but what do you think of it?’

‘That it ain’t—excuse me—got much body in it; leastways not like the burgandy I am used to. But just another glass, Mr. Bul—beg pardon—Mulbery, and then to business; for here is the locksmith,’ he added, as a grimy man, with a handful of tools and a rather scared expression of face, was ushered into the room.

‘Open the locks of them drawers and this here wardrobe,’ said Mr. Weazle, with an air of authority; and the smith, with a nervousness that caused some delay, set about the task. Meanwhile Mr. Weazle filled up the time by

imbibing another glass of wine, and remarked in a low voice to Mulbery, who was eyeing him and his unusual proceedings with mingled distrust and disdain :

‘Is it true that the old gent’s daughter ran away with the young fellow that is in quod for them missing notes?’

‘No, sir,’ replied Mulbery sharply, and colouring for the honour of the family.

‘No! What then?’

‘He ran away with her, and she was privately married to him—to Mr. Thomas Seymour,’ replied honest Mulbery, who loved Mabel dearly, and resented every slighting remark regarding her.

‘A love match, regular, eh?’

‘Yes; and no wonder.’

‘Why?’

‘Such a sweet young lady she is.’

‘Ah, but such things never turn out well, do they, Mulbery?’

Mr. Mulbery grimly drew up his shirt-collar, but made no response. There were bounds to familiarity, he thought.

The drawers proved nearly empty, yet Mr. Weazle turned them out and inspected narrowly all they contained, looking behind each to see if aught was concealed, or by chance had dropped there; but nothing of consequence was found. The wardrobe contained but some heavy winter overcoats, shooting and hunting garments, the pockets of which he examined in vain. He then mounted a table to inspect the top uselessly. He had the wardrobe drawn from the wall; there was nothing behind. Once again he turned to inspect a long drawer at the base; it was quite empty. Suddenly a snort of satisfaction escaped him; and drawing forth an ivory foot-rule, he applied it without and within the drawer, and found the latter measurement four inches less than that on the outside.

He rattled it with his knuckles; the sound was undoubtedly *hollow*.

‘A false bottom here!’ said he. But he strove in vain to discover the secret of the spring or springs.

‘Bother the thing,’ said he to the smith; ‘take your chisel and split it up.’

This was very speedily done, and an exclamation of intense satisfaction escaped Mr. Weazle when the reward of his journey and inquisition lay before them: the gray-coloured light dust-coat, which he drew forth from amid a heap of letters from Aimée and others, old betting-books, and many odds and ends valued by Foxley, and diving his hands rapidly into each of the pockets, drew forth from the breast one, to his own utter bewilderment—bewilderment at the stupidity of Foxley in preserving them—a bundle of crushed but still crisp notes of the Bank of England, the very missing notes of which he had the numbers in his memorandum-book. He was all but speechless with astonishment at and disgust of Foxley's folly. In all his professional experience he never had 'come across such another muff.'

'How came you to suspect the existence of this secret drawer?' asked Mr. Brooke, who had come promptly to the room on hearing of the discovery.

'The young lady as left this—'

‘My daughter?’

‘Exactly, sir—young Mrs. Seymour told me that she knowed her cousin had some such place of concealment in his room; and I came here direct, as you see, with official instructions on the subject.’

‘You have seen my daughter lately then?’ asked Mr. Brooke, in a voice which he strove to control.

‘I was with her last night.’

Regardless of the presence of Mulbery, Mr. Brooke now overwhelmed the detective with a multitude of questions as to how she was living and where—and he shivered when he heard all—how she looked and was dressed. And so much also were the feelings of Mr. Weazle interested in the matter that he unconsciously drained the last drop of the burgandy, though it had so little ‘body in it.’

‘Commend me to a woman’s instinct, or whatever they calls it, after all, sir,’ said Mr. Weazle, warming up with his wine and the whole affair. ‘“If Mr. Alf Foxley hasn’t

spent the money—and you know he dared not do it after the numbers of the notes were advertised—and if he has not destroyed them, Mr. Weazle,” said the poor young thing, weeping like to break her ’art—that was after she left ’Arley Street—“they’re in a secret drawer, which I knows he had in his dressing-room;” and, sure enough, here they are, no thanks to me, but to *her*.’

‘Poor Mabel! poor Mabel!’ murmured Mr. Brooke; then, after a pause, Mr. Weazle said,

‘So you see, sir, we have found out who the gent was in the light-gray coat.’

‘My nephew is then guilty—’

‘Of concealing the money, at least.’

‘You have the numbers of the notes that were stolen?’

‘All here, sir; and we can compare them together, if you please,’ added the detective, as they adjourned to the library. ‘That Mr. Foxley took the notes to bring Mr. Seymour into trouble, Mr. Skeemes hasn’t a doubt, and that is why he has put the briny between him and Scotland Yard.’

‘And you are actually a detective?’ said Mr. Mulbery, eyeing their visitor as a *lusus naturæ*, having never seen one before.

‘Yes, in full bloom.’

‘And you took to this business naturally?’

‘Just as fellows take to shaving or smoking.’

The numbers of the notes were duly compared. Mr. Weazle betook him to pen and ink. The dates of Foxley’s arrival at and departure from Thaneshurst, and the interest he took in the wearer of the light dust-coat, without admitting that *he* was the visitor, were all duly noted down. The testimony of Mr. Brooke, of Mulbery, and the smith, as to the discovery of that garment and the notes, was duly signed, and the whole were sealed up for the use and information of the authorities in Scotland Yard, under the private seal of Mr. Brooke, who was filled anew with shame, amazement, and compunction, and who wrote by the first post to his solicitors in Lincoln’s Inn Fields to join issue with Mr. Skeemes for the protection of Tom Seymour.

And after some luncheon with the butler, Mr. Weazle departed from Thaneshurst, very well satisfied, in many ways, with the result of his journey and the amount of wine he had imbibed.

‘A valuable old party is Mulbery,’ he hiccupped, as the train steamed away from Lewes; ‘the governor should have him stuffed when he dies and put into a glass case; would look uncommon well in a corner of the library, in his black coat and white veskit.’

In the servants’ hall it was carried that Alf was foxey by nature as well as by name; and a hundred ugly stories concerning him were now recalled to memory, though Polly Plum, while dangling in her ears the rings he had given her on one occasion in the shrubbery, was heard to mutter a faint dissent.

That night the will which Mr. Brooke had shown Alf, but left unsigned, was, after brief but mature consideration on that gentleman’s part, very deliberately committed to the flames.

CHAPTER VII.

THE WOLF OF BADENOCH.

AND now to explain the reason of mail after mail coming into Gibraltar, and yet there being no letter for Stanley from Connaught Place, though one of importance for him from Mrs. Allingham had unaccountably miscarried.

On a bright August morning—the same morning on which Mr. Weazle overhauled, with such success, the repositories of the absent Mr. Foxley—a beautiful English yacht, with her fore and aft mainsail, gaff-topsail, staysail, jib, and flying jib, all white as snow and bellying out on the wind, might have been seen by the idlers—if there were any—running on a taut bow-line southward and westward off the Bolt Head, that great promontory on the Dorsetshire coast, which is perforated by the Bull's Hole, a mysterious cavern, which has an opening into Saw-mill Bay, and through

which the fishermen allege a bull once penetrated. He entered it at one end jet-black, and emerged into the opposite bay white as driven snow.

The spanking cutter in question had the burgee of the Royal Yacht Squadron flying at her masthead, and over her taffrail floated the white ensign with the Union and Red Cross, two pieces of bunting which were 'doused' when she got farther off shore.

She was the Wolf of Badenoch, belonging to the Master of that name; and had on board his bride—for such the fair Fanny now was—her sister, Mrs. Allingham, and Milly, with Larkspur and Craven of the Hussars, all bound for the Mediterranean on a voyage of enjoyment; and none save those who have been on board of a well-found English yacht can be fully aware of the luxury and comfort to be met with.

The Master of Badenoch had on board his French cook; a captain, who combined the duties of sailing-master with his command, Mr. Frank Fairway, of whom more anon; a

couple of mates; a boatswain and crew, who kept all their watches in regular man-of-war fashion. Of the crew six or so were trained as a band. Every morning the decks were swabbed and holystoned till they were milk-white, every rope was coiled away round the cleats and belaying-pins; her two brass carronades shone like gold work in a Bond Street shop, and the whole craft was trim and a-taunto as any in her Majesty's service. Her rigging was perfect, each rope lying in the chafe of another.

Mudie supplied the books; Collard the piano; while there were cards, drafts, *bézi*que, and backgammon to encourage flirtation and while away the time when nothing was to be seen on deck, which, in such waters as the Wolf was to traverse, was seldom the case; and the after part of the saloon-cabin was quite a conservatory with flowers and ferns in glass cases.

She was the flower of the Squadron Regatta at Cowes, and many a shout of applause had she won from the inhabitants of the

yachting metropolis as they crowded the beach in thousands to see her 'walk the waters like a thing of life'—a veritable belle of the seas—her copper bright as gold, burnished on her sharp bows and all along her beautiful run to the counter. And in this very month she had shone in all her glory along the fore-shore of Cowes, where the beach in front of the castle, the grassy slope, and the Green were covered by admiring multitudes, and the Osborne, steaming off the harbour, had the royal standard flying at the main, and all the royal children on board shouting with glee; and at such times the Wolf was the winner of many a cup, though all thought her name odd who knew not she was so called from her owner's ancestor, 'the Wolf of Badenoch,' who distinguished himself in the fourteenth century by destroying the cathedral of Elgin. Hence Milly Allingham, Fanny, and her sister, when they donned their orthodox yachting costume—blue Oxford jackets with gilt anchor buttons, with skirts of Cambridge blue—adorned their piquant, saucy, and tiny

glazed hats with blue streaming ribbons, inscribed 'Wolf of Badenoch' in gold letters, to the great delight of Frank Fairway, the gallant commander thereof.

Milly, who was secretly the object of his intense but hopeless admiration, was the delight of the whole crew, for frequently she was in the wildest spirits, and seemed to have cast aside a great deal of her former or constitutional calmness, serenity, and aristocratic impassiveness; for, sooth to say, the whole voyage had been suggested by herself, abetted by Fanny Conyers; and manfully she endured the horrors of sickness, when beating down the Channel and off the skirts of the Bay of Biscay, while inspired by the hope that, if they could get into Gibraltar—as of course they should—Stanley might be enabled to join them for a cruise by Malta, Sicily, and the Levant.

Hence the two lovely conspirators, Milly and Fanny—'Dimples' as they used to call her, more dimpled now than ever—had many a covert laugh and many a merry arrangement, made in secret, and all unknown to

Larkspur and their other friends; and yet ever and anon a gloom would come over the former, for her affectionate heart could not forget her lost friend Mabel Brooke, and poor Seymour awaiting his trial in the House of Detention. Then she would strive to think that all must yet be well; that, as Tom could not be guilty, he would of necessity be declared innocent; and as old Mr. Brooke was so rich he must in time forgive them, and she would find them all happiness when again she returned to England.

Then Milly's lightness of heart would come back to her, and she would laugh heartily with thoughts of her own when she heard Fanny tinkling on the Collard in the cabin, and singing,

‘He thinks I do not love him;’

for she knew that now Stanley was aware *she* loved him well. To Badenoch, Larkspur, and others on board, Milly's change of demeanour — though gayer than ever — was somewhat of an enigma, for her old spirit of coquetry had entirely gone.

Of all those on board she preferred the captain of the yacht, Frank Fairway, a fair-haired and blue-eyed gentlemanly-looking seaman, about forty years of age, who had been some years a midshipman in the Royal Navy; but having made the mistake of becoming his captain's successful rival in a love affair, the latter made the ship a floating pandemonium to him, and so forced him out of the service. Conversational, anecdotal, and intelligent, he made himself specially agreeable to all the ladies on board—to none more perhaps than Milly; and sooth to say the fair passengers were of a type rather different now from what they were before the Master of Badenoch became a Benedick; for even the fair Aimée de Bohun had once been on a trip in the *Wolf* to Norway all unknown to Foxley, and very awkwardly was left behind at Christiania with Craven's brother Lord Oaks, so famous for his turfy proclivities. So Milly spent much of her time on deck with Fairway, to whom she always listened with pleasure.

‘Mamma,’ she said, in explanation of this, ‘you know how horrid I feel to have to *make* conversation, as one has always to do with such glazed-booted mariners as Larkspur or Craven. Besides, I came to sea to amuse myself—not them.’

And a charming picture she made, with her little hands thrust into the pocket of her blue jacket, her hair ruffled by the breeze that blew the long streamers of her piquant hat out behind her, her naturally delicate colour heightened by it, and her eyes sparkling with animation as she listened to Fairway’s explanations of all that pertained unto the sea.

‘Oh, I should doat upon the life of a sailor!’ she exclaimed.

‘But one’s life is not always spent in a floating drawing-room, like this yacht,’ replied Fairway, looking softly into her face, while he smiled at her girlish enthusiasm and glee.

‘What a deal of the world you must have seen, Captain Fairway!’

‘I may say, with a certain writer, Miss Allingham, “my rough mode of life is little

more than a long catalogue of commonplace hardships—hardships that sailors come to look at as the ordinary events of existence, and which certainly tend to make us somewhat careless of existence, but very ready to enjoy it while it lasts.” ’

When it came that the yacht had to work against a head-wind in the chops of the Channel, and encounter a little foul weather when skirting the Bay of Biscay, the ladies did repent that they had not crossed France and met the Wolf at Marseilles. But it was too late to repine, and twenty times in the Bay Fanny wept and clung to her laughing spouse, declaring that they were all going to the bottom, for the swell there is dreadful. The Bay presents a wide opening to the full action of the Atlantic, the waters of which roll in with all their weight, till they are arrested on either shore, and hurled back upon the central masses, thus producing a long heavy swell, or waves that are high and short; and on these the tiny yacht was borne about like a cork, after they lost sight of the headland and light-

house of Ushant—the last of Europe seen by Napoleon, the last of the land of his glory. When the weather was rough, even Badenoch sometimes thought that, ‘but to please his women folk, it would have been better fun to be potting the grouse in Strathbogie.’

But ere Finisterre in Galicia came in sight the ladies had all got ‘their sea-legs,’ as Captain Fairway remarked, and very pretty and well-shaped they were, he thought, as the breeze and roll of the yacht had enabled him to observe; and he was too much of a sailor not to be somewhat of a connoisseur in taper ankles and so forth.

To the fair tourists the various headlands and towns, as they ran along the coast of the famous Peninsula, were a source of daily—often hourly—interest, and ‘John Murray’ and ‘Ford’ were ever being referred to, especially by Milly, who deemed each point of land but a step nearer to Gibraltar and to Stanley, and fretted in secret at the frequent anchorages by night.

Now that Finisterre was left astern, after

some long tacks off shore, the next land they saw were the Barlengas, a cluster of rocky islets, north-west of Cape Carvocira, and around them the white waves were dashing merrily in the bright morning sunshine.

‘These are what we English sailors call the Barling Isles,’ said Fairway, as he handed his telescope, duly sighted, to Milly, and watched with honest admiration the grace of her pose and the beauty of her bust as she took a long look at the Portuguese fortress and lighthouse that rise above the rocky cluster. ‘I shall never forget the night on which I saw that bit of Leira last, Miss Allingham.’

‘Why—what happened?’

‘I was in the Queen’s service then, Miss Allingham,’ said Fairway, with a certain sad inflection of voice that always came upon him when he referred to those past days,—‘in the Queen’s service,’ he repeated, with a certain spasmodic contraction of the muscles of his handsome bare throat, ‘and little thought then to end my days as captain of a yacht,

unless it might be her Majesty's own, for I was a boy and full of ambition.'

'Is this a love story?' asked Milly softly, and dropping her lashes for a second.

'Far from it,' said he, laughing; 'but it was a singular coincidence or fatality. I was on the Lisbon station, and for the benefit of my health was coming home on sick leave, in one of our merchant vessels bound for London. She was a brig of some two hundred tons, under a captain named Joyce, a man of ungovernable temper, who, on being crossed, or irritated by the most trivial matter, burst out into torrents of oaths and blasphemies that were a horror to listen to. His words often filled the crew with fear, and again and again they told me in secret that not one of them would ship with such a man again, as his language was calculated to bring destruction on the brig and all on board; for we sailors, Miss Allingham, though we *may* rap out a rough word now and then, are generally religious and God-fearing men, with many a superstition that is innocent enough, for it is

born of our lonely lives, and the salt-water whereby we live.

“Revolving light on the port-bow!” shouted the look-out ahead.

‘The captain came rushing on deck, uttering such words as *you* cannot conceive, and I would not dare to repeat even to a man. The weather was very stormy; lightning was playing about the crests of the waves; the men looked pale and blankly in each other’s faces, and muttered their dread and detestation in whispers.

‘The night was undoubtedly a wild one on which to find ourselves almost inside the Barlengas. Thick black banks of clouds were piled up over each other to windward; the thunder grumbled hoarsely; large hot rain-drops were falling, plashing on the deck and in the seething sea. Ere long the whole firmament was shrouded in murky gloom, and nothing could be seen but the revolving light, flashing out at times dimly as a star ahead. By and by, as if to add to the weird aspect of the night, alternately with the

streaks of lightning, there came a narrow one of moonlight, at the lower edge of the cloud bank, showing the black outlines of the tumbling billows, and amid the bellowing of the wind, and the flapping of the canvas, as another reef was taken in, we heard the captain swearing at the men like a lunatic, using such language that I wonder the teeth didn't drop out of his jaws.

‘As the squall was increasing all hands were ordered to shorten sail; and as some of them were slow in their work, again the oaths of the captain were heard above the roaring of the wind and the booming of the sea, and he ended one awful imprecation by saying,

“May my bones whiten among the Barlengas if I don't rope's-end some of you within an inch of your lives!”

‘At that moment a meteor, like a ball of fire, shedding such a ghastly light that every man's face, every wetted rope and plank in the ship were distinctly visible, exploded with a thundering report, right over the poop, and all again became instant darkness. But where

was the captain? Lying on the deck stone dead—struck down, as it were, by the hand of Heaven, in the midst of his blasphemies.

‘His body showed no marks of injury, but was quite black, and decomposition set in so fast that ere the revolving light on the greater islet was abeam, we had to throw him overboard. So, sure enough, Miss Allingham, his bones were left to whiten amid the rocks of the Barlengas.’

To Milly, Fairway’s anecdotes were always unlike any she had ever heard before, especially in the namby-pamby circle called ‘society;’ and often, when he gazed into her dark, earnest, and intelligent eyes, he would sigh and think,

‘By Jove, it is enough to make a fellow think better of the world, of life, and of himself, even to look at her!’

And she, on her part, without an atom of her old coquetry, liked the honest sailor; ‘for it is the law of human nature to feel kindly inclined to those who admire us,’ and she knew that he admired *her*.

Greatly to Milly's annoyance they lingered at Lisbon, and 'did' the Salitre or shady promenade, the royal palace, the cathedral, and the usual amount of picture-galleries which one must see everywhere. Then she hailed Cape St. Vincent with its lofty rocks, and when that of St. Mary was left astern the yacht made one long tack, with a splendid breeze across the Bay of Cadiz, on a moonlight night, when a wondrous bright and fairylike phosphorescence glittered over all the sea.

A soft and lovely evening, when the sun was setting into a golden sea, and when the band was on deck playing 'Hearts of Oak' and other national airs, saw the Wolf under a spread of white canvas off the sandy headland of Trafalgar, by the old Moorish stronghold of Tarif-al-ghar, and Fairway's clear bright eye lit up as he pointed it out to Milly, and reminded her of Nelson and the glorious 21st of October 1805; for even after the lapse of all these years the name of Trafalgar finds an echo in every English heart.

Long ere the sun rose next day the walls

and towers of Tarifa were on the weather-quarter of the yacht, which began to encounter stiff and baffling head-winds as she was hauled up for the Straits of Gibraltar, and Fairway found himself compelled to stand closer in towards the coast of Africa than he could have wished to have done; and so great were the variations of the compass, and so much lee-way was made by the cutter, that even he—at all times jovial and pleasant—lost his temper and became fretful; but Milly was full of bright joy, feeling assured that to-morrow would see them safely moored in the Bay of Gibraltar.

She revelled in the thoughts of Stanley's astonishment on finding her *there*; and again and again she repeated to herself, 'Surely no one is so happy as I am!'

Poor Milly!

CHAPTER VIII.

CAUGHT IN A LEVANTER.

THE baffling wind still continued, and next day's dawn saw the yacht hugging close the coast of Africa, and Fairway, who had taken the morning watch, which extends from four to eight A.M., impatiently pacing the deck and glancing alternately aloft and to windward, but thinking all the while of Milly Allingham.

‘What can there be in this girl that interests me so?’ thought he, as he trod to and fro in the dusk of the early morning, right over the place where he knew she lay abed. ‘She is, of course, very unlike any one I ever met before, and I am not a young spoon now to fall in love with every pretty face—pretty! Hers is downright lovely! Besides, they say she is engaged to some soldier-fellow in Gib.’

‘They’ had been Miss Araminta Conyers,

who had, in a moment of confidence, hinted at this to Fairway—out of kindness of course—though her attention was then fully occupied by Craven. The latter—a good-looking young fellow, with no angularities or leading features of character—had devoted himself to little Araminta, who had only to look herself to please most people, and who had a sufficient amount of vivacity and conversational power to pass for being clever, and even witty.

Her face was a very perfect one, and most pure in its contour and complexion, with its white and pink, a rosebud mouth, a nose a little *retroussé*, with blue-gray eyes that were more blue than gray, with long black lashes that contrasted in hue with her golden-brown hair and dark eyebrows; and, moreover, she was, as Craven asserted, ‘a stunning girl, who could do ten miles of round dancing on the wing of a chicken and glass of champagne-cup!’

Every way the little party on board the yacht was a pleasant one; but though it was apparent to none, there had been a species of

rivalry between Major Larkspur and Fairway; not that Milly Allingham was the kind of girl the former generally affected; for, sooth to say, that gallant field-officer stood somewhat in awe of her, and one like the fair Aimée was more in his way; and certainly *he* was not the style of man who came up to Milly's standard of taste.

But dazzled by her undoubted beauty, by perpetual propinquity in their circumscribed circle, the major thought himself in love; and if disposed to play with edged tools, he might find Milly much sharper than his regulation sword. But in the preoccupation of her thoughts she was but half aware of the flattering mode in which the Hussar—now clad in accurate yachting costume—was wont to address her, till one day he wound up a long and lisped oration on love by adding in his most insinuating manner,

‘Who talks of love, Miss Allingham, makes it.’

‘That depends, major, upon whom it is told of to, and when.’

‘Of course.’

‘Then don’t talk of it to me at any time—*now* especially,’ she replied, laughing.

‘You are very severe with me,’ replied the baffled Larkspur, also laughing nevertheless. He had decidedly a good opinion of himself on the score of personal attractions; and he never permitted a doubt to enter his mind—not a very capacious one—that, backed up by his substantial monetary qualities, and his good cash account at Bullion, Goldie, & Co.’s bank, he was somewhat irresistible. Thus, as they had voyaged on together, he had thought from time to time,

‘“She is a woman, therefore may be wooed;
She is a woman, therefore may be *won*.”

Go it, Larkspur! Surely she could never be so blind to her own interests and to your good qualities as to decline a proposal when you actually choose to make one.’

But before his august mind was made up, some very startling events occurred.

Singularly enough, though Fairway, with his limited means—a salary derived from the

Master of Badenoch—no more thought of proposing for an heiress like Milly than of jumping overboard, he had the instinctive feeling of having a rival in Larkspur, whom he greatly disliked; not that he envied him for his wealth, for Fairway was too generous and good-hearted to envy any one; but he despised him for the fine airs he gave himself, and thought him ‘a cavalry parvenu.’ And one thing that worried the honest Fairway was, that he could not adopt with regard to Milly the *empresé* manner of the Hussar.

The very moustaches of poor Larkspur, carefully bandolined into a ring at each end, were, if a source of unlimited employment to him, one of contempt to Fairway, who indulged only in a very nautical pair of whiskers, with two fingers’ breadth of clean-shaven chin between; and when the major—some of whose antecedents had been discovered by the French cook of the yacht—treated him, as he sometimes did, patronisingly, Fairway would turn away, and mutter angrily,

‘D—n his impudence! He is called the

son of a Turkey merchant in the Hussars; would the mess like to know that his papa sells poultry—turkeys certainly—in Leadenhall Market, and that, thanks to his industry, he can keep half a dozen nags in barracks, while some who are his betters are glad to pay two guineas a day for a mount to the hounds?’

And some such thoughts as these were chafing the mind of Fairway when Milly, fresh as a newly unfolded rosebud, came smilingly on deck, and, presenting her hand, asked him where Gibraltar was now.

‘Ah, it is always Gib. that’s uppermost in her mind. What a fool I am to indulge in daydreams of what *might* be!’ thought he. ‘Gibraltar, Miss Allingham,’ he added aloud, ‘lies over there on the weather-bow, about twenty-two miles off. Can you see the blue outline of something like a lion?’

‘I do,’ said she, smiling brightly; ‘but in size it looks more like a mouse,’ she added, gazing at it earnestly and wistfully, and shading her beautiful eyes with a snowy hand,

while the other rested on the arm of Fairway.

‘Shall we—shall we be there to-night?’

‘Not with this wind, especially if it freshens, as I fear it will. The weather is too rough already for you to be on deck.’

Indeed while he spoke the yacht, laid as close to the wind as she could be, was shipping sea after sea ahead; and the watch forward, as they turned their backs and sou’-westers to the breeze, were undergoing a perpetual system of drenching.

Just as he was handing her towards the companion-way, the boatswain came aft, and touching his hat, said,

‘Do you see what is abeam of us to leeward, sir, and keeping way with the cutter?’

Fairway turned, and after looking seemed a little disconcerted—for seamen have strange instincts and superstitions.

‘A hammer-headed shark, by Jove!’ he exclaimed.

‘A hammer-headed shark it is, sir; and I would rather not have seen it.’

‘Nor I, with this Levanter evidently freshening fast. Do the watch know of it?’

‘Yes, sir.’

‘Then to be forewarned is to be forearmed; and we’ll have some rough work ere we get our ground-tackle rove.’

In total mystery as to what all this meant, Milly went below, feeling fretful at the conviction, that though Gibraltar was in sight they would be some time in reaching it, and all because of that odious wind. Oh, how much she wished the yacht had been a steamer, and thus indifferent to head-winds and opposing currents!

The shark in question, which was supposed to be ominous of some coming disaster—a storm at least—is often found in the Mediterranean, and not unfrequently in other seas. It is the most hideous fish that swims; and the seamen watched its strange head, made like the letter T, all mouth, with an eye at each end, as it bobbed from time to time above the white seething water.

After a little it disappeared; but the crew,

who were all on deck now, were clustered forward, whispering and looking to leeward in search of the shark again, till there came a blast that nearly laid the cutter on her beam-ends, and caused Fairway at once to take in the gaff-topsail and flying jib, and the sea began to froth and whiten against the dense black banks of cloud that came rolling up to windward, from the horizon to the zenith.

‘Poor girl!’ thought Fairway, ‘she’ll not see Gibraltar to-night—nor the soldier-fellow either!’

Then he began to wonder whether she was to remain there, whether go to Malta and Sicily with the Wolf, and whether she would come back with him. He felt he would miss her society sorely; their intercourse had been so pleasant; and to him it was delightful to have felt himself *au mieux* with such a girl as Milly Allingham, from the very day she had come on board.

But now the gentlemen of the party came on deck, and they, with the necessity for taking another reef in the fore and aft mainsail,

and strengthening the guys of the mainboom, somewhat interrupted the ruminations of Captain Fairway.

‘How do you think the weather looks?’ asked the Master of Badenoch, turning up the collar of his pea-jacket, as the spray hissed about him.

‘Very dirty, as you may see, sir,’ replied Fairway; ‘and I am afraid we are in for a night of it, with a very stiff Levanter.’

‘Deuced annoying; so the ladies must keep to the cabin.’

Indeed, it was blowing so hard now, that Badenoch and his friends could not keep their cigars alight, and betook them to short meer-schaums, of wonderful size, construction, and colouring; and swaying about on the heels of their glazed boots, with their hands in their jacket-pockets, they all tried to look as nautical as possible, and as if ‘quite used to this sort of thing, you know.’

And yet, with all their harmless nautical foppery, our three Hussars were perhaps second to none of those who rode in the Death

Ride at Balaclava, and would have done their *devoir* there, or anywhere, as nobly and as well, though they undoubtedly had the *blasé* tone of London men of fashion, tempered and improved by that bearing which pertains alone to the officers of our cavalry.

The gale increased to an absolute storm, and ere long Fairway had to reduce the canvas on the cutter to only what was necessary to steer her by, and enable them to do their best in working off a dangerous lee-shore, towards which the current ever and anon bore them.

Keeping the cutter as close to the wind as she would lie, the whole of that dark day was spent in struggling with the tempest; and so opaque was the sky, that night—a night brightened by flashes of lightning alone—seemed to come on before its time; and as nothing could be seen of the coast, the leadsmen was ever at work with the hand-lead; but as yet there was no symptom of shoaling in the foam-flecked water.

The darkness was so dense and heavy that, as Larkspur said, one seemed to *feel* it; and

only once or twice the land was visible, when the sky seemed to be rent asunder by a strangely prolonged and vivid flash of lightning.

The pride of Cowes behaved bravely. Over her low gunnels and flush deck the waves rolled with irresistible force; but she swam like a duck, and rose from them buoyantly and defiantly, though only a few yards of canvas were spread; the jib-boom was run on board; the square yard was brought on deck, and the gaff-yard lowered as much as it could be for working. Everything had been made fast aloft and alow; and when Fairway gave the order to have 'the dead-lights shipped in the stern windows,' the four ladies, all huddled together, looking so white and terrified in the cabin, thought it had a very dreadful sound, supposing that ghastly lanterns of some kind were referred to.

In the pretty boudoir-like little cabin everything was in a state of confusion; and the ladies were too full of fear and many conflicting thoughts to take any heed of the time;

but the day that had preceded the night seemed to have been a long, long, and certainly terrible one. They saw nothing of that lightning which on deck imparted by its powerful blaze a livid tint to every face and rope and spar, as the skylights had been secured and covered up by tarpaulings; but they could hear the incessant rushing and washing of the water, as it burst over the deck from time to time, the trampling of feet, the hoarse sound of human voices, the bellowing of the wind, and a medley of other sounds, produced they knew not by what, yet all, to them, fraught with terror.

Fanny's bright hazel eyes, that were always laughing—the Master of Badnoch averred that they laughed even in her sleep—were scared in expression, and filled with great welling tears of more than childish terror and dismay; and from the gentlemen, who came down from time to time to have a refresher from the steward, and who looked drenched, white, and grimy, for each had to take his spell at the pumps, she could obtain

no information, but only assurances that they were, as yet, in no danger. And pretty Fanny tried to pray. She had now forgotten all about that which had been their chief topic during the voyage — a ball which Stanley's regiment would be sure to give them when they reached Gibraltar.

During all this catastrophe Milly was in an agony of remorse; and as she embraced her pallid mother and clung to her, in her secret heart she feared that she had lured her to a dreadful death by selfishly bringing her on this yachting excursion, which she (Milly) and Fanny had schemed and devised between them.

And oh, she thought, was it not dreadful for her and them all to be perishing almost in sight of Gibraltar, where *he* was, in total ignorance of their peril and fate—at that moment, perhaps, merry at mess with his brother-officers—perishing after all their separation, his past dangers, and all their miserable mistakes—perishing when on the very eve of meeting! How cruel, how inexorable was Destiny!

From time to time Mrs. Allingham read them passages from the Scriptures, particularly the twenty-first, twenty-second, and twenty-third verses of the thirty-third chapter of Isaiah.

Suddenly there was a dreadful crash on deck, and a simultaneous shriek escaped them all.

‘Don’t be alarmed, ladies,’ said the boatswain, coming half way down the companion-stairs; ‘it’s only the topmast snapped off at the cap; but it’s all along o’ that ere —— shark!’

The wreckage was cut away, and the cutter laboured less. Fairway had wished to strike the mast, but the fid was fouled in some way and could not be withdrawn, so the blast broke it off like a piece of barley-sugar.

‘I would to God, sir,’ said Fairway, ‘we had the ladies safe on shore. I should not care for ourselves; some of us would weather the gale somehow, even if we rode it out on hencoops.’

Neither Craven nor Larkspur seemed to

think the latter would be a pleasant alternative. But now, about midnight, the gale began to abate; the lightning ceased to play, and the thunder seemed to rumble afar off at the horizon; the wind and sea went down together; the reefs were shaken out of the fore and aft mainsail; the gaff hoisted a bit, and the jib was sheeted home. But the rattle of the chain pumps was ceaseless, for the Wolf had started a leak somewhere, and pure water came from the well.

As day crept in, the land became visible, and very close too. Fairway knew that the mountains he saw were the chain of the Little Atlas, which approaches nearer to the coast, though running sometimes parallel to the Great Atlas; but whether he was off Tangiers or Ceuta, he was unable to determine; but on seeing a pretty little bight or bay open, with a small town or village, before which some fisher-boats lay hauled up on the beach, he steered in, sounding with the lead, and came to anchor in ten fathom water.

CHAPTER IX.

THE PICNIC PARTY.

FAIRWAY'S chief object here was to set up his spare topmast, and have the leak looked to, ere he stood over the Straits to Gibraltar. The morning was one of great beauty; the sky was serene; the sunshine hot—so much so that he had the awning shipped over the quarter-deck; and there the ladies, all laughter and smiles, in the revulsion of spirit after the late terrors they had undergone, had their coffee, and looked with unfeigned interest on the land; for the little creek in which they lay was a portion of the mighty continent of Africa.

In Africa, thought Milly; and but a week or two before, she and Fanny had been caracoling their horses in Rotten Row.

A boat from the shore now came off to the yacht, pulled by four men, who seemed

to be half-Arabs and half-Spaniards—dusky, swarthy, and black-eyed fellows, with glossy glittering eyes, rings in their ears, and wearing their hair in nets. They had oranges, citrons, and pomegranates for sale; and from one who called himself by the mongrel name of Ben Targa, and who spoke a little English—picked up no doubt at Gibraltar—they learned that the creek in which they had anchored was distant a few miles from the Spanish station of Ceuta, and in the territory of the Sultan of Morocco.

On this new land and varied scene the party in the yacht, now in the highest spirits and glee, could not but look with interest—the Arab cottages clustering near the white sandy beach, each with its little garden and well, and nestling amid topes of orange, citron, and lime-trees; the ripe wheat waving yellow on the upland slopes beyond; and far away in the distance the snow-capped peaks of the Atlas chain. So it was immediately voted and passed that all should go ashore, while Fairway looked after the refitting of the yacht;

but he, having been up the Mediterranean before, warned the gentlemen of the party, and all men who might accompany them, to go well armed, as there were certain dangers to be met with in that part of the world in the shape of escaped criminals from Ceuta, where the Spaniards keep a number of galley-slaves in chains—hard-worked, half-starved, and nearly naked, and who, when they did achieve their escape, became the enemies of all mankind. Then there were the Arab vedettes, who keep a strict watch upon Ceuta, and suffer no intercourse to take place between it and the interior, so that the territory does not extend beyond the range of their own guns upon the fortress; and the said vedettes were not particular to a shade in their mode of handling any strangers who fell into their hands.

The Master of Badenoch, Larkspur, and Craven made very light of all these warnings, and the first-named laughingly said,

‘By Jove, Fanny, we’ll have a picnic among the Moors! I have been speaking to

that fellow with the ear-rings, Ben Targa—a picturesque-looking villain, isn't he? He tells me there is a grand cascade on a stream about a league or so inland—the only thing worth seeing hereabout. The steward shall pack a hamper for us—we'll cool our champagne in the stream; and by the time we come back the yacht will be ready for standing across the Straits.'

The ladies prepared to go ashore with alacrity. The steward, with two assistants, soon packed a basket, which was to be borne shoulder-high, slung on a boat-hook; and the sight of some Spanish dollars made Ben Targa amazingly active in procuring four mules for the ladies; and as they set forth inland under his guidance, the entire population of the village would have accompanied them, had not he—a man in some authority among them apparently—ordered all to retire, though the Master of Badenoch rather enjoyed the spectacle—the men either half-naked or muffled in the *haique* or white-woollen plaid peculiar to the Moors, and the dark-skinned, meagre, yet

active-looking boys wearing little more than a *cummerbund* or cloth round the loins. As for women, none were visible.

Mrs. Allingham felt uncertain about an expedition on which the gentlemen found it a wise precaution to take their revolvers, and even their breech-loading fowling-pieces, as they might find something 'to pot;' but the three young ladies were enchanted with the novelty of the whole affair, and surveyed with delight the groves of oranges, lemons, the prickly pear, and the Barbary fig that bordered the way; but all the land seemed open, and in many places uncultivated.

The three officers were on foot, walking each by the side of a lady. Ben Targa, the hybrid Arab or Spaniard, went in front, bare-legged and bare-footed, leading the bridle of Mrs. Allingham's mule; while the steward and two seamen with the hamper brought up the rear. But to judge by the time it took them, the distance they proceeded inland was evidently much more than a league—nearly two; but then Ben Targa's ideas of miles

might, no doubt, be somewhat vague; and as they ascended into higher ground, whence at times the blue Straits were visible, Milly often turned in her saddle, in the hope of seeing Gibraltar.

The Master of Badenoch saw her doing so, and said with a smile,

‘You will be nearer it by this time to-morrow, Miss Allingham; for the wind has veered round to the south-west, and we shall have a delightful run across. You will see how we shall leave the Moors astern of us.’

Milly coloured a little at this remark, as it showed her that he knew something of her secret; and she asked Larkspur, who was marching on by her side, fanning himself with his glazed hat, if his regiment had ever been stationed there.

‘Oh, no,’ said he, with a laugh, in which his brother-officers joined; ‘cavalry never go on service to the Mediterranean.’

‘Where the devil can this cascade be?’ asked the Master, looking about him, and then questioning Ben Targa, who, grinning,

showed all his white teeth, and said in English and Spanish,

‘Come this way, sir,’ pointing to a ridge of rocks, the steepness of which compelled the ladies to leave their mules, the bridles of which he skilfully linked together; and then, as they penetrated over this ridge and through a grove of olive-trees, the thunder of a cascade began to be heard; and suddenly, as the trees opened, they came upon a scene that fully rewarded them for the toil of their walk from the creek, and an exclamation of surprise and pleasure burst even from the usually languid and lymphatic Larkspur, who was rather apt to ridicule the picturesque in general, and scenery in particular, as ‘a weak invention of artists, hotel-keepers, and novelist-fellows.’

The cascade was a kind of rapid in a mountain-stream that bowled away towards the Straits. It was steep, some forty yards in breadth, and nearly a hundred in height. Over a horseshoe-shapen mouth of rock the snowy torrent poured, in vast and ceaseless

volume, into a raging abyss of foam and spray below, whence it gurgled away in its bed of rock to meet the sea.

The sunbeams, falling upon the cascade, imparted to it the most splendid rainbow tints, while vapoury mists rose high in air on every side. The bright green palms and cork-trees that overhung the rocks imparted a wonderful beauty to the scene; while the bordering masses of stone, like the fallen ruins of a cyclopean wall, were covered with luxuriant aromatic plants. The tall-stemmed genista, the different species of cistus, mignonette, and cactus were all growing there, and the solitude of the place seemed great, for no sound broke it save the ceaseless roar of the descending water.

The beauty, verdure, and grandeur of the whole scene were very great.

‘But the noise is a little stunning,’ said Fanny; so, retiring to a plateau of rock a little way back from the head of the cascade, the steward began to unpack his hamper, and, after spreading a snowy tablecloth, to lay out

the edibles, while the drinkables were placed for coolness in a tiny pool of the stream.

A draught of wine was then given to their guide, who retired, as he said, to look after the mules.

Jack Fortnum, the steward, rather prided himself upon his catering, quite as much as the French cook of the yacht did on his *cuisine*; the *pâtés de fois gras*, the veal-and-ham pie, the trout stewed in madeira, and cold roast fowls, the sauces and accessories of every kind, were unexceptionable. The fruits were the luscious melons, oranges, and pomegranates just procured from Ben Targa, and grapes from home, packed in sawdust. The champagne, the château Yquem, hockheimer, and moursirender moselle, and even the bitter beer, were, we have said, cooling in the stream, where the gilded necks of the former alone were visible.

The novelty of the situation was great, even to those who were palled and *blasé* with amusement and pleasure; thus all were disposed to the full for joy and merriment; but

now and then a little shrill cry would escape Milly or Fanny, as a huge ugly grasshopper, of a size and aspect peculiar to the clime, appeared among the grass, and once, too, a scorpion of most portentous proportion; however, it was promptly killed by Jack Fortnum, who 'jobbed' a dinner-knife into it.

There, too, were hovering about an incredible number of butterflies, the wings of which were variegated by the most brilliant colourings, some being green edged with shining gold, others were skyblue edged with silver, and some like dark-purple velvet bordered by both.

Ever and anon the quick white fingers of Milly and her fair friends would try in vain to catch one, and amid much heedless merriment, fun, and idle conversation the pleasant popping of the cooled champagne was heard from time to time.

'We have to thank you very much for an unexpected pleasure,' said Mrs. Allingham to the Master. 'Your picnic is quite a brilliant idea, after all we underwent last night.'

‘And I am so sorry we haven’t Mr. Fairway with us,’ added Milly.

‘Good fellow Fairway,’ replied the Master, ‘but he prefers his yacht to all the world.’

Milly smiled one of her conscious smiles, which she saw reflected in Fanny’s eyes, and which was as much as to say,

‘I don’t think he would prefer his yacht to *me*!’

‘Another round of the champagne, Fortunum,’ said the Master; and the glasses were held up readily—for the day was warm—as the steward went round.

‘Ah,’ said Larkspur, ‘the best comfort to be got in this world is that we receive at the hands of the Bottle Imp.’

‘Please don’t say so, major,’ urged Mrs. Allingham.

‘I think his remark quite naughty. You know, major, I am a matron, and entitled to rebuke you.’

‘More than all, you are my hostess,’ said the major; who added, as he wiped his moustaches with a damask napkin, and reclined on

the rich soft grass: 'Badenoch, my boy, Fortnum's lunch has been a success—first-rate, in fact—and the cliquot has been out-and-out.'

'Why, Larkie, it is the same stuff we have been getting every day since we left Cowes. But I think we should give that Arab fellow—Ben what's-his-name—a drop. Attend to him, please, Fortnum.'

'What shall I give him, sir?'

'A bumper of champagne.'

'Dashed with brandy. We'll have some fun with the fellow then,' suggested the mischievous major; who, however, was doomed to be disappointed; for after Fortnum, with bottle and a rummer in hand, had gone in search of Ben Targa, that personage was nowhere to be seen, neither were the four mules.

'He was our guide here—he must come back,' said the Master; adding, 'Allow me, ladies,' as he lit a cigar.

'Of course; how should we reach the beach else—and without the mules?' ex-

claimed Mrs. Allingham, whose proportions were somewhat ample.

‘Oh, never fear; the beggar is only in the bush somewhere,’ said the Master. ‘He has not yet been paid for his services, and will be sure to turn up in time.’

The time passed on, however, and he did not ‘turn up.’ This circumstance was remarked again and again, but none made open reference to what was recurring in all their minds—the warnings of Fairway ere they left the yacht; their ignorance of the way back to the creek, and the difficulty of taking the ladies there on foot, if the fellow, by some chance or design, failed to return.

But what design could he have in view?

CHAPTER X.

THE SKIRMISH.

THE day was beginning to be pretty well advanced, and now the grand chain of the Lesser Atlas, with all its snow-capped summits, was gradually assuming some gorgeous tints, and turning from opal to purple, gold, and crimson against the pure deep blue of the sky; and after looking at his watch, the Master of Badenoch began to think it was imperative they should make some movement towards the yacht. But the steward and his two assistants, who had repacked their hampers preparatory to departure, searched all the neighbourhood of the cascade in vain for the guide and his four mules.

‘What do you see, Craven?’ asked the Master of his subaltern, who, having adjusted a powerful field-glass, was looking with it steadily in one direction, and replied,

‘I see him we are in search of.’

‘Ben Targa?’

‘Yes.’

‘What the devil is he about?’

‘Going to have some shooting apparently, as he is armed with a musket.’

‘Your glass for a moment, Craven. Thanks.’ After looking for a moment, the Master changed colour. ‘He is not alone. Five other men are with him now, and they are loitering on a rock *between* us and the way we must infallibly go to reach the yacht.’

‘Now what may this mean?’ asked Larkspur.

‘More than we yet see; for they seem to be watching, but not approaching us.’

‘That scoundrel Ben Targa has broken his word—armed with a musket too.’

‘We don’t live usually in a world of melodrama,’ said Craven, who had again betaken himself to his glass; ‘but, by Jove, I don’t like the look of those fellows on the rock.’

One or two of them had on little more than blue baggy Arab breeches. All were

very brown, bare-legged, bare-footed, and well bearded. Two wore the tarboosh of a dirty dusky red; two had turbans, and one a straw hat, with his black hair done up in a net; and all had muskets in their hands and knives in their girdles. That their intentions were hostile scarcely admitted a doubt; and Badenoch turned to his charming little wife, now, like her companions, scared and pallid, and there flashed upon his mind the agonising thought of what their fate might be in the hands of such men as these. The papers had been teeming lately with details of the outrages committed on some English tourists by the Greek brigands, and his blood ran cold.

‘Some of those unpleasant-looking fellows are Europeans,’ said Craven.

‘Spaniards?’

‘Yes, three certainly—escaped *galeotes*, or slaves from Ceuta, each “the best of cut-throats,” no doubt,’ added Craven, as he opened his breech-loader, and quietly dropped a cartridge into each barrel and readjusted the pin.

‘I wish I had a section of my troop here with their carbines,’ said the Master; ‘we’d polish off these fellows double-quick.’

‘Fairway’s warnings were sound, after all. O mamma, mamma!’ moaned Milly.

‘Take courage, Miss Allingham; we are at present six to six, and better armed,’ said Craven.

‘At present yes, sir,’ said Jack Fortnum, to whom Craven handed his revolver, as Larkspur and the Master did theirs to the two seamen, retaining their own breech-loading rifles; ‘but many more o’ them beggars may come upon us before the shindy is ended.’

‘We might defend this rock all night, till Fairway comes in search of us; and we have still plenty of provisions in the hamper,’ said the Master cheerfully.

‘And six more bottles of cliquot still untouched,’ said Larkspur, as he and the Master loaded.

These actions were not unseen by the men on the rock, about sixty yards off. They were evidently engaged in conferring to-

gether, and gesticulated violently. Once or twice one would advance, beckoning on the rest to follow him; but none did so. At last Ben Targa was seen coming to the front alone; and cocking his breech-loader, the Master went forward to meet him, despite the piteous entreaties of Fanny and Larkspur's offer to go instead.

Halting within twenty yards of each other, the Master said,

‘Hi, you fellow, Ben Targa, or whatever you call yourself, what do you mean by loitering, as you do? Why the deuce don't you bring the mules?’

‘*Los mulos*, aha!’ he replied, with a grin; ‘the mules will not be required.’

‘Then how are the ladies to get to the beach?’

‘*Las senoras* are *not* going to the beach.’

‘Where then?’ asked the Master, breathing hard and fiercely.

‘With you and the other senors to a village near this,’ he replied, in a jargon of Spanish and English.

‘For what purpose?’

‘Till we arrange about one leetle, *leetle* ransom—the *duros*—guineas Inglesos; a thousand for each of you!’

‘Six thousand pounds! I wish you may get them.’

‘Thanks, senor.’

‘Take care of what you are about, rascal. I shall report you,’ exclaimed the Master, slapping the butt of his rifle.

‘To whom?’

‘The kaid of your province, and to the English consul at Tangiers.’

‘If you live to see him, senor—if you live to see him,’ grinned the fellow, as he defiantly slapped the butt of *his* musket, one of those made at Tetuan, and withdrew to confer again with his gang, shouting as he went, ‘Lo digo muy de voras! (I am in earnest!)’

‘It is as I expected,’ said the Master grimly—‘a case of ransom and extortion, perhaps worse; but we must not trust ourselves alive in the hands of those fellows. We’ll do them, however, never fear.’

In spite of all his endeavours to appear confident and cheerful, the agitation of the Master of Badenoch—an agitation born of his keen anxiety for the safety of the four ladies, especially of his wife—was expressed in his face. He looked pale and anxious, and his manner, though naturally a brave fellow, was embarrassed and disordered ; for this *blasé* Hussar—this Master of Badenoch, who had run through the whole curriculum of London life, with all its luxury, vice, and folly—loved now little Fanny with a dog-like devotion of which once he could never have believed himself capable ; and this love for ‘Dimples’ had raised him to a purer and better state of existence.

Stories of the cruelties and outrages committed on the defenceless and helpless by the Sepoy mutineers, by Greek pirates in the Archipelago, by Wallachians, and so forth, came rushing confusedly on his memory, and perhaps on the memories of them all ; for they had no time to compare notes then, death and terror were too close at hand.

And on Milly's mind there flashed the idea—as when in the gale yesternight—could Stanley but know her peril! And her soul, though a brave one, sank within her at the prospect of all they might have to endure; for though the day and year of the Christian era are the same, there is a vast difference between the comfort and safety of being within a league of Connaught Place and Ceuta, Tyburnia and the province of Tangiers.

But the Master of Badenoch saw the necessity of infusing courage and cheerfulness into those about him.

‘D—n the half-naked beggar’s impudence!’ said he; ‘thinking to get a thousand pounds a head for us men fellows; the ladies he deems, no doubt, priceless. So do I. In that we agree. Every man has his price—’

‘Ah, so said Sir Robert Peel or—Walpole, was it?’ said Larkspur, floundering.

‘I don’t know, Larkie, and I don’t care; but I hope these scoundrels will get more lead than gold out of us.’

‘As we cannot force our way past them,

we can but defend this post until succour comes from the yacht,' said Larkspur. 'Fairway is sure to come on with an armed party, when he finds that we don't return.'

'But how can he know where we are?' suggested Craven. 'We landed for a lark, and we have got one with a vengeance.'

One fellow was now seen to leave his companions and disappear in their rear. It was but too evident he had gone for a reinforcement, and, while awaiting, the rest were seen to light their cigars, and squat on the grass with their arms beside them; and to the little English party it was a time of keen anguish and anxiety; for to await the coming of more ruffians was to insure their destruction, and to attempt to leave their rocky fastness, when the river protected their rear, might, by drawing the fire of those who remained, end in the death or mutilation of some of the ladies. As for the men, they never thought of themselves.

It is very doubtful if Ben Targa and his brother-rascals would have ventured on their outrageous proceedings but for the state of

confusion in which Morocco had so suddenly become involved—a state in which it still is, as the papers of the present day inform us.

Never very well ordered at any time, the whole country was convulsed, and an army under Ben Hamo, by order of the Sultan, was then encamped in the valley of Zeenat to chastise the plundering hill-tribes of the Tangier provinces, who are cattle-lifters and cut-throats. Many of the chiefs had been seized, fined, fettered, and imprisoned. But the Sultan and all his officials are little better than thieves; and when the finances require to be replenished the kaid, or governors of provinces, if they value their heads, have to put the screw without mercy on all the richest merchants and notables, by saying simply, ‘Sinda (our lord) wants money; he who fails to bring me a thousand piastres shall die under the bastinado.’ In 1870 the kaid of Dar-el-Beida, for failing to find the requisite sum, underwent, for a whole month, the daily torture of being hoisted up, quite nude, between two erect poles, and let fall upon a

heap of branches of the Barbary fig-tree, which are armed with long thorns, that penetrate deep into the flesh, producing tortures under which he expired.

When the Sultan has extorted a sufficient sum, he restores his victim to all his former honours, and waits till he is ready for a fresh application; or he may send for him, receive him with extraordinary favour, and present him with a cup of coffee. A few hours after the royal audience the favoured person always expires in violent convulsions.

Such was, and is, the pleasant country in which the little picnic party found themselves so suddenly menaced by unusual perils. It seemed too incredible to be situated like people in a novel or drama—they, English folks, and folks of fashion too. What *does* it—what *can* it mean? they thought. Is it a dream or a reality? They cannot all have that horrible dream at once.

In the pale face of Mrs. Allingham there was an expression of agony for Milly that seemed to have aged it by several years.

Craven and Larkspur were genuine Londoners, and hence, so far as the great world goes, were somewhat provincial, and apt to judge of everything by the standard of Piccadilly and the Old Bailey; but here they were beyond their calculation, and they were in such a scrape as rarely befell the roving Englishman or British tourist; yet there was no want of pluck in them; and as for the Master of Badenoch, his Highland blood rose to fever-heat with rage at the whole affair.

The fellows on the rock were now joined by some more, making their number fifteen in all, and all armed. Thus there were but six armed Britons to oppose these desperadoes. There was an intensely clear yellow light—the light that precedes sunset by an hour or so; and it brought all their picturesque figures out in strong and striking outline. This was so much the worse for themselves, but all the better for our three officers with their double-barrelled breech-loaders.

After a little consultation, the whole began to advance, but slowly, with Ben Targa

a few yards in front; but they halted when the Master brought his rifle to his shoulder.

‘We are all well armed,’ he shouted, ‘and deadly shots too, as you will find. Not a piastre shall you get as ransom; so tell your scoundrels so in their own language, whatever it is. Help is coming on to us from our ship, and you will all be severely punished.’

Fierce and ironical laughter greeted the translation of this by Ben Targa, and again the advance was resumed.

Badenoch found the impossibility and futility, too, of further trifling. Again he raised his rifle, and as he took a steady and remarkably Hythe-like aim a wild and startled expression came into the faces of the ladies, who put their hands to their ears or eyes, and gave one united shriek, when one barrel went off with what sounded a very dreadful bang.

A yell from the gang responded, and, shot clean through the head, Ben Targa gave a wild bound upward, and without a cry fell prone on his face stone-dead.

‘Down, Fanny; down, ladies! Keep under cover behind the ridge of rock,’ cried Badenoch. ‘We must keep down too, my friends, and fire in succession, each reserving his fire till the other reloads; we must never have all barrels empty at once.’

Bang, bang, went two shots from Craven and Larkspur, and two more fell wounded, as they were seen to roll about in agony. This rather cooled the ardour of the rest, who, as they opened fire, did so from behind boulders, broom, and genista bushes, instead of advancing with a rush, as the Englishmen feared they might do; so the latter lay flat in rear of the ridge, which formed a species of breastwork, and in this Wimbledon fashion opened a fire at regular intervals, and in a style the foe did not quite appreciate.

The balls of the latter, which evidently came from old muzzle-loading guns, went wide of their mark.

‘Curses upon them!’ suddenly exclaimed Larkspur, as the rifle fell from his grasp—a ball had pierced his right hand, which was

instantly covered with blood. 'I am useless now,' he added; 'here, Jack Fortnum, take my rifle. First bind up my hand with a handkerchief—so—thanks. I shall hurry to the yacht for help, while you show what fight you can here. Charge the revolver for me fully; and Heaven have mercy on any nigger or Arab who attempts to stop me, for I'll have none. I'll go all the pace I can. Good-bye, ladies. I'm off like a bird—but a winged one!'

To bring succour if possible was the only way in which poor Larkspur could be useful now.

'I can easily get back to the creek in three-quarters of an hour or less,' he added, as he slid down into a little ravine near the stream, got completely out of sight, and made off with all the speed he could exert by the way, so far and so closely as he could recollect and judge, they had come; and as he recognised the landmarks and bearings his confidence and hope rose together, and such speed did he exert that in a very short time

the sound of the intermittent firing in his rear died away.

Till the firing began, the ladies had failed to realise fully that there was any real danger. We live in such safety and ease at times, that to be suddenly involved in such a skirmish—an affair of life and death—seemed almost impossible. Yet it was so.

‘Now, Fanny,’ said Badenoch cheerily,—‘now to test the rifle and pistol practice of the Royal Hussars. By Jove! there is another fellow knocked over—showing his heels where his head should be.’

But Fanny only wept wildly on the bosom of her sister, and Milly lay with her face buried in her mother’s lap; and while crouching thus thought, would they ever survive to relate how the horrid bullets of these ferocious and swarthy wretches hissed over them, or shred away the twigs from the olive-trees, ripped up the turf, or, with a little crash, were flattened out like silver stars on the rocks beyond where they lay, hiding and trembling like poor rabbits in their burrow.

‘Come, come, Fanny, don’t give way thus!’ urged her husband, as he dropped a sixth cartridge into his rifle and closed the breech-pin; ‘you’ll see how we’ll knock over the entire lot like ninepins. Close as they lurk, there are four *hors de combat* already. Why, Fanny darling, even the poor stags in Badenoch turn and become desperate and dangerous when cornered by the hounds; and *we* are not cornered by these curs yet. How many rounds have you, Craven?’

‘Twenty still.’

‘And you, Fortnum?’

‘There are eighteen in the major’s belt, sir.’

‘Good. I have nearly thirty—sixty-eight rounds; ammunition cannot fail us.’

But now the besiegers, if they could be called so, began to change their tactics. They divided themselves into two parties; and while six maintained a fire from the front, five others, creeping on their hands and knees and dragging their muskets under them, came round to attack the flank of the ridge which pro-

tected their victims. But as they drew nearer, the sputtering fire of the revolvers was heard, as the two seamen, who were armed with these weapons, opened upon them.

Larkspur had been gone more than an hour; the sun's red disc was just beginning to dip beyond a great grove of evergreen oaks; the shadows of everything were deepening and falling far to the eastward; but there was no sign of succour yet when this perilous flank movement was made; and moans and sighs of terror and dismay escaped the ladies.

CHAPTER XI.

THE FELUCCA.

ON the same morning when the Wolf of Badenoch, crippled by the loss of her topmast, came to anchor in the creek, as we have narrated, just as the morning gun boomed from the Rock of Gibraltar, a felucca began to work out of the Bay of Algesiras. She was evidently a smuggler—one of those craft which take in cargoes at Gib. and land them on the coasts of Portugal, France, and Algeria, in spite of the Spanish guardacostas or revenue cutters.

These smugglers are always felucca-rigged, a style peculiar to the Mediterranean; they are worked by sweeps as well as sails, and to be prepared for emergencies have always a heavy gun concealed under their netting; and though the crew of the felucca referred to were chiefly Spanish, or rogues of several na-

tions, she had a dingy Union Jack displayed, and was bound for the coast of Tangiers.

On board of her as passengers were those who might have found themselves in an awkward predicament had any complications arisen between her skipper, Manuel Pinto, and the officers of a guardacosta: these were Rowland Stanley and his friends Neddy Knollys and Joe Trevor. The former had been refused leave for England; but with the other two, having got some good-natured friends to take their guards, and so forth, had four days accorded them to shoot on the opposite coast.

With Stanley it was anything to kill time, and avoid the growing emotions of anger and mistrust, where love and implicit trust should have been; and doubtless—so he hoped, or flattered himself—a letter from Milly explaining all would await him when he returned to head-quarters.

There were no tigers to pot or hogs to spear, as when the regiment had been in India; but in a craving for sport or excitement of some kind, our friends took advantage

of a passage in the smuggling boat to have a day or so with their double-barrelled rifles among the zebras, antelopes, or anything else that came in their way; and Manuel Pinto was to pick them up on his return.

The personal appearance of the capitano and that of all his crew was pretty much the same.

He was a powerfully-built man, with a brown face reddened by constant exposure to the sun and sea-breeze. His massive silver earrings were almost hidden by the masses of his black and tangled hair. The expression of his face belied his nation, as it was rather ferocious. His teeth were white and strong, his eyes black and bright. His hands were brown and muscular; his breast was bare and brawny. The former were tattooed in gunpowder with anchors and rings; on the latter were a cross and the initials of his wife. His crew were all bushy-whiskered fellows, with red sashes round their waists, and in these were stuck, not ostentatiously, knives of that kind cutlered at Albacete in Murcia; and

some of them had their hair gathered in net-bags, like the fishermen of Barcelona.

There was a great motion in the water, owing to the severe storm of the preceding night; thus, as they cleared the Bay of Alge-siras and the towering rock-fortress rose high in air, the felucca alternately rose on one wave to sink deeply between two, rolling heavily the while, though she was not before the wind.

The morning was still dark; thus, when the gun was fired that announced the first streak of dawn far away over the sterile isle of Alboran—the home of the sea-birds—it flashed like a red flame out of the black port-hole.

‘El cielo esta cargado de nubes, senior,’ said Manuel to Stanley; ‘las nubes san muy espesos.’

‘What the devil is all that?’ asked Joe Trevor.

‘He says the weather is very dark and hazy, and that the clouds are very thick.’

‘We can see that for ourselves.’

The wind was light as the sun rose, and the sail into the straits was very pleasant; ere long the wind fell so greatly, that the huge canvas of the felucca began to flap lazily, and then, running out their long sweeps with two men to each, the crew betook them to pulling.

The three officers had with them an ample picnic basket of creature comforts, which had been packed for them by the mess-man; and as they shared their brandy and tobacco freely with Pinto and his cutthroat-looking crew, they speedily became popular with them; and still more so when, throwing off their coats and rolling up their shirt-sleeves, like sturdy young Englishmen as they were, they took a tough spell at the sweeps.

Stanley's chief idea in crossing the straits to shoot was simply to kill time, as we have said; but he also hoped to get a spotted hyena's skin, or so, for Milly—it would be a pretty trophy to present to her; and perhaps Knollys had some such idea about his pretty cousin, the little widow at Hampton Court.

Free from the monotonous trammels of

Lord Ogleby, I know my own failings too well to be severe on those of *others*.'

'Don't insult your superior officer, but pass the bottle, Joe.'

'We shall hit nothing to-morrow, if we begin with our tippie so early to-day.'

'What's the odds if we don't? We chiefly come away to be jolly,' said Trevor; 'for here we can snap our fingers at the old commandant, the colonel, the world, the flesh, and the devil. Novelty and fresh faces are as necessary to me as fresh air.'

'Well, you have a choice of rather foul faces, to judge from the unwashed *marineros* of this gallant felucca.'

'What *are* you dreaming of, Stanley? You are not going to relapse into your old kind of general out-of-sort-ishness—eh?' exclaimed Trevor.

Stanley only laughed and lit a fresh cigar, but kept his thoughts to himself. His mind had been wandering off to Milly, and into the endless ramifications a subject so tender and attractive was sure to lead a soul so imagina-

tive as his; besides, when their banter was exhausted, he felt rather disposed to muse. They were more than half-way over now. The Rock of Gibraltar had lessened greatly astern, and the Moorish coast was rising fast, and becoming more distinct and clear in all its features; and when the evening sun began to redden the straits, they were so close in, that they could see without their glasses the palm-trees, the groves, and people moving about on the beach, while they sat, or lounged, or lolled, smoking or drinking from time to time, talking of the garrison duties and abusing the barrack accommodation on 'the Rock.'

Trevor, who had been across once before, expressed fears of discomfort in the squalid Moorish café, at which they would have to put up for the night—full of dirty niggers smoking opium, and where nothing more soothing or refreshing could be had than kief or strong green tea.

'Man alive, think of our hamper!' said Knollys. 'What are you grumbling about, Joe?'

‘Well, its contents won’t last for ever.’

‘We don’t intend, I hope, to remain on this side of the strait for ever.’

‘See!’ exclaimed Stanley suddenly, as a creek in the coast (along which the felucca was creeping under easy sail) suddenly opened—a pretty plain with a white sandy beach, some Arab huts, and pleasant groves of trees. ‘There is a smart cutter—quite like a Cowes yacht—at anchor, but with all her canvas loose and ready for sea.’

We need scarcely say that the craft referred to was the Wolf of Badenoch, on board of which, Fairway, with considerable anxiety, was awaiting the return of the party from the cascade.

The felucca was about two miles off the mouth of the creek.

‘This is as good a place as any for us to land. Put us ashore here, Pinto,’ said Stanley.

‘Bueno, senor,’ said the skipper; ‘but hold! what does that mean?’ he exclaimed, in broken English, as the yacht ran up the British ensign *reversed*, and fired a gun.

‘A signal of distress,’ said Stanley. ‘Out all the sweeps, Pinto, and stand straight into the bay.’

The sheets were slacked off as the wind came more aft; all bent with a will to the sweeps, and at times the light felucca seemed to be actually lifted out of the water, till she came sheering alongside the cutter just as a boat, with an armed crew of eight men, put off from her side.

‘Rifles and fixed bayonets!’ exclaimed Stanley, with kindling eyes; ‘by Jove, this looks like work! Steer in for the little pier, Pinto.’

‘Si, si, senor.’

‘What cutter is that?’ hailed Stanley to those in the boat.

‘The Wolf of Badenoch, Royal Yacht Squadron,’ replied Fairway, who was accoutred with sword and pistol, to the hail, as he handled the yoke-lines, to lay the boat alongside the rude pier.

‘The master the Hon. Mr. Comyn of the Royal Hussars?’

‘The same, sir.’

‘What the devil is up? Why is that flag of distress flying?’

‘If you’ll join us on shore you’ll deuced soon see!’ was the hasty response of Fairway.

‘Of course we shall; we are three officers on leave from Gibraltar.’

‘Then come, for God’s sake, and welcome!’

Now a man in the boat, whom Stanley perceived for the first time—a man covered with dust, and whose clothes and face were spattered with blood, dressed like a sailor, but with the bearing of a gentleman—started up as the two craft came sheering alongside the pier, and exclaimed,

‘Is that you, Stanley—Captain Stanley of the —th Regiment?’

‘Yes, by Jove; and you—you are Larkspur of the Hussars?’

‘The same,’ replied the other, who seemed so pale, breathless, blown, and disordered.

‘Here in Africa! why, man alive, where

have you dropped from—the moon? We have just run over—my friends Trevor and Knollys of ours—to have a little shooting.’

‘Pray Heaven we may be in time to save them!’ cried Larkspur fervently.

‘Save them! Save who?’ asked Stanley, as they all scrambled ashore together.

‘Is it possible you don’t know?’

‘Know what?’

‘That a party of us sailed from Cowes in Badenoch’s yacht—his wife, her sister, Mrs. Allingham, and her daughter.’

‘No, no; and where are they? What does all this mean?’

‘It means, Captain Stanley,’ said Fairway, ‘that, in spite of my advice, the Master and his party would go picnicking in this infernal country; and they have been surrounded by a gang of the lawless natives somewhere inland. Now, major, we have not a moment to lose; please guide us all to where they are.’

Stanley, Trevor, and Knollys joined Fairway’s party; the former asking a hundred

questions as they rushed breathlessly along the road under the guidance of Larkspur, just as the light of the day began to give place to that of the moon.

CHAPTER XII.

A NARROW ESCAPE.

WE left the conflict going on near the cascade at a time when the little party of Englishmen were being taken in flank as well as in front, and so completely occupied with the work of defending themselves, that they had not time to cast a glance along the road to see whether the hoped-for aid was coming.

The evening was closing in, the musket-shots flashed out redly, and more than once the cry of a wild animal—a hyena probably—wailed upward from an adjacent thicket.

‘When the darkness deepens they will rush upon us, and then we shall be murdered!’ moaned Mrs. Allingham.

‘There will be no darkness,’ replied the Master of Badenoch, adjusting himself at full length to take another steady aim. ‘The

moon will be so brilliant, Mrs. Allingham, that its light will be in our favour.'

He fired a single barrel, and a shriek of pain and rage informed them all that his shot had told. This Wimbledon mode of firing, by which head alone was exposed, puzzled and terrified their adversaries, to whom it was totally new.

The two seamen, who were armed with revolvers, emptied them too fast, and being bad marksmen, did so without avail. The assailants on the flank drew closer, and nearly at the same moment shot both down—one through the head, and the other through the heart. A crisis was at hand, for now the odds were fearful—eleven men were opposed to three; and when Fortnum received a flesh-wound in the left arm, there remained but two—the Master and Craven.

'By the Lord, sir,' said the steward, with a groan of pain. 'I shall be reduced to use my knife now,' he added, opening it with his teeth, 'and as a man and a Christian—'

'I don't feel much like either,' exclaimed

the Master, now pallid with rage and alarm, 'but more like a devil or a Turk.'

'Here they come closer on us to star-board !'

'If we had not had the ladies with us, we might have made a running fight of it to the beach ; our breech-loaders gave us such an advantage,' said Craven, by the discharge of his two barrels winging, but not completely disabling, two of the five who were attacking them on the flank, and thus gaining a little more time.

But aid was coming on.

The thought that one so dear to him was so near and in such deadly peril inspired Stanley with the wildest excitement, and moments there were when he felt and seemed quite beside himself, as the party proceeded with all speed along the road.

'In Africa—Milly in Africa!' he kept repeating ; for in all his strangest flights of fancy such an eventuality had never occurred to Stanley.

'Is it not some wild delusion—some dis-

'torted and hideous dream?' thought he; but there was Larkspur, pale, worn, and bloody, the messenger of alarm and war; 'Milly in the hands, perhaps completely at the mercy, of lawless wretches such as Barbary Moors!'

Soldiers, like sailors, are accustomed to sudden situations, emergencies, and dangerous contingencies; but the present was an event beyond all calculation, in these times of peace and good order.

'It is like some of our work among the hills in Bhotan,' said Joe Trevor.

'Yes; and the Conyers girls are, as I told you, the sisters of little Wickets, who died ere we fell back on the plains of Assam.'

'By Jove, yes! And the Miss Allingham of whom Major Larkspur spoke with such *empressement*, and the skipper too—who is she?'

'Get on—on, on; she is Miss Allingham,' replied Stanley, a little incoherently.

'Pretty?'

'She is downright lovely!' exclaimed Fairway, the yacht captain, angrily; 'but instead

of talking let us push on, for Heaven's sake !'

'What distance have we to go, major?' asked Stanley feverishly.

'About three miles now.'

'God help them! Come on, lads, come on!' cried Stanley, who gradually got in advance of the whole party.

His brother-officers, Trevor and Knollys, could not understand this extreme agitation on his part, though Larkspur, who remembered certain passages and circumstances at Thaneshurst and Brighton, did so to some extent: they could only know that English folks were in some tribulation; that English girls, and pretty ones too, were in great danger; and *that* was enough for them.

The habitual self-control so dear to the native-born Englishman, and the intense detestation of what is called a scene, were all thrown to the winds now, and Stanley was excited. He was furious, but when he spoke he could scarcely recognise his own voice.

'Beg pardon, sir,' said a yachtsman, who

was armed with a rifle and bayonet, as he touched his hat; 'but, Captain Stanley, don't you remember *me*?'

Stanley stared at the sailor vacantly, and seemed too preoccupied to inquire or reply.

'I'm Bill the foretopman, as was with you in the *Queen* when she was wrecked off the Azores.'

'Oh—Bill—yes; could I forget you and the awful time we had of it on the bunk? Excuse me; but I am rather bewildered now,' he added, shaking the seaman's hard brown hand. 'And so you belong to the yacht now.'

'Yes, sir, and a lovely little craft she is; none better out of Cowes or Ryde, either on a wind or before a wind, and answers her helm, so that one might turn her round on a sixpence.'

But Stanley was too full of his own terrible thoughts to share in his newly-found friend's enthusiasm about the cutter, or even to express satisfaction at meeting him, and only muttered,

'On, on; let us get on!' adding in thought,

‘Can all this be reality? Half an hour ago I knew nothing of it;’ for again, as when drifting on the wreck with Bill the topman and the other seaman, he felt as if the present episode was but a wild and miserable dream.

The sun had long since set, its last red rays had faded away from the snowy peaks of the Atlas chain, but the moon shone brightly out, filling with silver light the scattered groves of cork-trees and evergreen oaks. The occasional cry of a wild animal rang out upon the stilly ambient air, but ere long other sounds began to be heard.

‘That is firing—shots!’ exclaimed Stanley.

‘By Jove, the plucky fellows are at it yet!’ cried Larkspur.

‘Get on, get on!’ was the response of all; and though breathless and blown—especially the yachtsmen, who were but little used to this mode of progression—all now broke into a more rapid run.

Soon after yells and shrieks were heard; then the red flashes of rifles and pistols seemed to streak the silver moonlight; and on crown-

ing a ridge in rear of the attacking miscreants, the succouring party, sixteen in all, came rushing with a fierce cheer to the rescue, just as the conquerors closed in upon their intended victims.

Craven and the Master of Badenoch, struck down by the butts of clubbed muskets, would soon have been despatched by the poniard, and poor Jack Fortnum too; but the sudden appearance of Fairway's band upon the scene, when all but too late, changed the aspect of affairs.

A powerful half-clad Spaniard, of singularly forbidding aspect—doubtless an escaped *galeote*—had slung his musket, and grasping Milly by both her hands, which seemed as those of a child in his hard and muscular grip, was dragging her away, with a knife clenched between his teeth.

‘Mamma—darling mamma!’ she exclaimed, in a voice of despair. A gleam of indignant anger mingled with the expression of terror in her eyes, there was a nervous, yet muscular, movement of her slender white throat, indicat-

ing a stifled sob of horror and dread of—she knew not what to come.

‘A thousand *duros*,’ shouted the Spaniard, ‘or we shall throw her into the cascade!’

Poor Mrs. Allingham, rushing wildly after the captor of her daughter, fell fainting and breathless on the rocky way, and hence saw not the coming aid, led by the impetuous Fairway, who, dropping on one knee, took a steady aim with a musket, and shot the Spaniard through the chest.

He fell wallowing in blood, and Milly lay beside him, senseless, utterly overcome by the whole affair, and knew not that she was in the arms of Stanley, who for a moment felt envious of Fairway, to whose hands Milly owed her immediate safety; for the Spaniard, on finding himself baffled, was quite capable of using his knife.

The rest of the gang had fled into the bush; and but for the presence of two or three dead bodies, some arms scattered about, the star-studded rock, which the flattened bullets had struck, and which actually glittered in

the moonlight, the whole episode might have been deemed a mere fancy; for all now was still, the rush of the falling cascade at a little distance, and the stertorous breathing of the wounded Spaniard, from whose broad and brawny chest the untended blood was welling, alone being heard.

Partially stunned by the blows they had received, the Master and Craven now staggered up. Fanny and her sister, though both for a time paralysed by the terror of a scene beyond their calculation altogether, soon recovered themselves; but not so Milly, over whose pale face Stanley hung, with what emotions may be guessed, while his blood ran cold at the idea of what might have occurred had their succour been five minutes too late in arriving.

CHAPTER XIII.

JUST IN TIME.

‘WHY, Badenoch, this has been a devil of an affair!’ exclaimed Stanley. ‘But what brought you here?’

‘The yacht.’

‘The yacht, of course; but why to such a place?’

‘The “Roving Englishman” goes to the Nile and even to India now; besides, you know my tastes are eccentric. But, as we are in the mood for questioning, may I ask where *you* fellows have dropped from?’

‘There is nothing remarkable in our being here. We took a run across the straits to have a little shooting; and seeing the flag of distress flying on the cutter anchored beside her in the creek, and so are here.’

‘You were just in time, gentlemen,’ said Craven.

‘And now I think we should get the ladies on board without delay,’ said Fairway.

The eight seamen from the yacht, with the three officers from Gibraltar, were quite ready to carry them in inpromptu litters or any way; but Craven and the Master of Badenoch would almost require to be carried too, so severely had they been handled in the fray. Mrs. Allingham and her daughter were quite helpless still; rest, shelter, at least for the night, was deemed most necessary; but where was it to be procured?

Here was a dilemma.

Stanley’s eye suddenly fell on the wounded Spaniard. Seizing him by the throat he gave him a violent shake, and asked him if there was any farmhouse, *quinta*, or khan in the neighbourhood.

‘O senores, por el amor de Madre de Dios, aunque mi alma se condene!’ whined the fellow. (‘O gentlemen, for the love of the Mother of God, kill me!’)

‘Speak!’ said Stanley furiously, as he put the cold muzzle of a pistol to his forehead.

‘Madre de Dios, ay de mi!’ he gasped.

‘We shall dress your wounds—speak, or *presto!* we shall send you back to the galleys at Ceuta, whence no doubt you came.’

‘O senor, it was not I who robbed the Posada del Sol at Tarifa, but Pedro—Pedro only,’ he added, as his mind wandered to some alleged crime.

‘Who the devil says you did?’ said Fairway, giving him a push with the butt of his rifle as if he were a dying reptile. ‘Is there any house hereabout?’

The Spaniard pointed with his hand, and fell back exhausted.

‘I can see a house over there in the moonlight,’ said Joe Trevor.

‘Where?’

‘See—its walls shine whitely out against the green of a thicket, about a quarter of a mile off.’

‘Some of the scoundrels who attacked us may live there?’ suggested the Master.

‘But there are sixteen of us now, and we

are all armed,' urged Knollys. 'But what is the Spaniard muttering now?' he added.

'He says that it is a khan or café for merchants and others proceeding between Ceuta and Tangiers,' said Stanley.

'Bravo!' exclaimed Fairway; 'that is the very place for us; so let us make our way thither at once.'

Stanley now turned all his attention to Mrs. Allingham and her daughter.

'Milly!' was the first utterance of the former, as she struggled back into consciousness.

'She is safe, and by your side,' said Stanley.

'I am here, dearest mamma,' murmured a soft voice that thrilled through Stanley's heart.

As she revived, there came swiftly back, with returning recollection, the last emotion, when she had fainted in the fierce strong grasp of that dreadful-looking Spaniard; thus an expression of rage and despair blended with the pride of a brave and defiant nature,

resolute to the last point of human endurance; and when her eyes looked again she saw, not those of the crime-stained *galeote*, but of Rowland Stanley, as he raised her from the ground.

Eager though he was for a brief embrace full of love and tenderness, he could but take her hands in his and gaze into her eyes; then he kissed her on the forehead and on her hair, like a brother or old friend. Before so many strange eyes, even in that time of high excitement, he dared do no more; and the *empressement* of this was lessened by his saluting Mrs. Allingham in the same manner.

‘O heavens! mamma, among those who have saved us is Rowland—Stanley—Captain Stanley!’ she exclaimed.

‘Do say Rowland only,’ he whispered.

‘I should not have known you, but for your voice,’ said she, weeping hysterically.

‘Why, Milly?’

‘You are so altered—so bearded, brown, and sunburned.’

They gazed for a moment or two into

each other's eyes, and were reading there volumes of sorrow and trial ; but the Master, who had both his eyes blackened in a most unpicturesque manner, and was otherwise smarting from many blows and bruises, exclaimed,

‘Now, Stanley, we really have no time for loitering or explaining. Give your arm to Miss Allingham, and lead the way to this confounded khan, café, or whatever it is. Come on, gentlemen—I wish my cuts dressed without delay.’

Thus urged, the whole party set off towards the house in question, leaving the slain marauders lying in the moonlight, where doubtless the wild animals would soon find them ; but two seamen of the yacht brought on the Spaniard, whose wound was dressed by a pad on his breast, after which he was left in the yard of the café to his fate. When looked for, an hour after, he had vanished, none knew where or how ; but the evil result of not making him a prisoner was found before many hours were past.

That aid should come to them in their direst extremity and peril was a cause for the purest thankfulness and joy; that with it should come Stanley seemed something short of miraculous to Milly and her mother. In the rapidity and horror of its details the whole episode through which they had passed might have seemed like a dream, but for their surroundings, the wounds of Larkspur and the steward, and the ugly bruises exhibited by Craven and the Master of Badenoch, whose affectionate little wife chirruped about him, hanging on each arm alternately, and laughing almost wildly in the excess of her joy, after the agitation she had undergone.

Rescued from deadly peril as they had been—more especially with the advent of Stanley and his friends—to Milly it was like being the heroine of a three-volume novel—a romance; and he and Trevor and Knollys seemed such dear, delightful, handsome fellows, all of them. It would be something to talk about for ever.

‘I never liked ugly men, Captain Stanley

—I *must* call you so here,' urged Milly plaintively; 'but, oh, the face of that Spaniard will ever haunt me—it was very awful as he clutched me.'

'It was not seen very advantageously,' replied Stanley, who listened to all she said with delight.

'And you, dear, dear Captain Fairway, how can I ever—ever—'

'Don't mention my little service, Miss Allingham,' said the sailor.

'Do you call it little? Another moment and he might have stabbed me!' she exclaimed, with a pretty tragic air, while her eyes dilated; and then she turned again to Stanley, and when their gaze met there was in both that expression which the young and loving never fail to recognise; and the old—ah, they must be old indeed when they forget it! Fairway read the expression as eye met eye, and he thought with a sigh,

'She *is* a genuine brick, this girl; and what would I not give to see her look thus at *me*? But here we are at the khan.'

CHAPTER XIV.

THE MOORISH KHAN.

AMID all the excitement of this affair Stanley had displayed remarkable coolness and presence of mind. Though a young man, he was somewhat of an old soldier. He had seen many deaths, from all manner of wounds and suffering, even by poisoned arrows among the Bhotanese in the far East, beyond the vast plains of Assam; so he could look more coolly on such an episode as the last than our three Hussars, and yet they had shown plenty of pluck.

As the party made their way towards the khan, Stanley thought how strange, yet how delightful, it was to feel the hand of Milly resting, with just the gentlest pressure, on his arm—a pressure that ere long increased with growing confidence. Where had she last taken his arm? At Thaneshurst, of course;

but when or under what circumstance he failed to remember now. To her he was the same handsome and willing Stanley as ever. His forehead was white, she thought; but the sun of the tropics had tanned and reddened his cheeks and neck. His fine crisp hair was shorn short, and his moustache stuck out with a fierceness which his tender and gentle eyes, ever so frank and dear, belied.

Fairway, who was assisting Mrs. Allingham, looked on the pair with irrepressible interest.

Knowing, or suspecting, the wealth of Milly, we do not suppose that honest Frank Fairway had indulged in any dreams beyond those of admiration; at least we hope not for his own peace, for he saw but too well, when she met Stanley, 'how the land lay, how the wind blew,' and all the rest of it. He could but sigh, twist up a cigarette, and think of his duty.

The khan was a huge rambling building, very like a Spanish posada, the lower story being entirely open, as accommodation for

horses or camels. The upper, which was supported on wooden columns, was reached by a species of stair that was like a ship's side-ladder, and was divided into several bare, but not unclean or untidy, apartments opening off a *sala* or public room, in which a large lamp was now flaming.

The landlord, a white-turbaned Moor of most respectable aspect, received his guests with many low genuflections, and not without a bearing that betokened some alarm. He saw that they were all well armed, and he must have heard the firing and general row that had gone on in his vicinity for most of the past day. However, whatever fears he had were allayed when informed, in a polyglot mixture of English, mingled with such Spanish and Arabic as are to be picked up in Gibraltar, that a few hours' rest for the ladies alone was wanted; and to attend upon these came his wife, who had a face more like a huge shrivelled fig than anything else in this world.

She surveyed her four lady-visitors with

wonder and curiosity—it might be with envy and hate, they looked so dazzlingly fair by comparison with herself, so soft and so unlike anything human—according to her Tangerian ideas of humanity—she had ever seen before.

‘Huespada hermosa mal para la bolsa,’ said Joe Trevor, with the most impudent wink, airing his Gibraltar-Spanish proverb, which means, ‘A handsome hostess is had for the purse.’

A couple of Moorish girls were the chief attendants. In the khan were to be had new wine, which the Moors drink burnt, thinking thereby to evade the law of the Prophet; a liquor made with honey and dates, and goat’s milk in plenty; and there were placed on the table platters of cakes, quinces, and red grapes, so large that they are called hen’s eggs.

The keeper’s wife was a very old woman of Fez, and had her eyebrows blackened and her nails dyed red. Her feet were bare, and being painted yellow, presented a curious contrast to her loose habit or dress, which was spotless white.

The yachtsmen were all grouped together in one room, where they made themselves comfortable (as they lolled on the floor, for seats they had none) with a jolly jar of the country wine and the contents of their tobacco-pouches. Poor Larkspur, whose wounded hand gave him great pain, had the member dressed by Craven as well as circumstances would permit, and Fortnum's scar was patched up in the same hasty fashion.

'Ah, Captain Fairway,' exclaimed Mrs. Allingham, with a sigh of relief, as she threw off her bonnet and shawl, 'I shall never forget the scene of horror we have witnessed to-day.'

'Yes ; two good fellows have lost the number of their mess, and the major and Jack Fortnum have both been winged. But after all, Mrs. Allingham, worse than all this happens in the good city of London every night.'

'In London, Captain Fairway?'

'Yes. Think of the murders, parricides, suicides, and robberies with which the morn-

ing papers teem, to say nothing of the wives belaboured with pokers, or jumped upon by Anglo-Saxons, as they boast themselves, in wooden clogs. So we may well expect a little shindy here, where every man goes armed to the teeth, and there are neither City nor Metropolitan police.'

When Milly was asleep on a couch, and the other ladies also—thanks to the overwhelming excitement of the past day—Stanley joined the Master, who with Trevor, Knollys, Craven, and the major were seated on stools and inverted tubs, and so forth, in the upper verandah, enjoying the brilliant moonlight, viewing the wooded scenery in the foreground, the Atlas chain towering in the distance, and twisting up cigarettes, and talking of 'the row,' as they called it, and sometimes 'shop,' as they were all in the service.

'So the gallant Stanley has prevailed upon himself to leave the ladies at last,' said Trevor.

'Come along, old man,' said the Master of Badenoch. 'By jingo, now for a quiet weed and a soothing smoke. Who's got some

cavendish and a match?—thanks, Craven. Any bitter beer in your hamper, Fortnum?

‘A bottle or two, and some moselle, sir.’

‘Good; let us have it all, for I don’t think the old Moor’s wine is drinkable. I wish, Fairway, we had taken your advice this morning, and not come to see their infernal cascade. By Jove, what a game of brutality, and all that sort of thing, we’ve been engaged in, don’t you know!’

‘But,’ replied Fairway, ‘there is no use in quoting what Byron calls the world’s bad Amen, “I told you so.”’

‘Well, Larkspur, old boy, how do *you* feel?’ asked the Master, emitting a cloud of smoke through his moustache.

‘Feel?’

‘Yes; after all this work, I mean.’

‘I feel as if I had been out all night boozing,’ replied the major; ‘’pon my soul I do.’

‘Ah, we all look queer,’ lisped Craven, as he drained a bumper of moselle; ‘we should not gain the applause of Hyde Park or the admiration of Piccadilly.’

‘These dusky devils have spoilt my pistol-practice and billiard-playing for many a day,’ said Larkspur. ‘I shall never make eight or nine cannons running again.—Another glass of moselle, Fortnum. Is your wound smarting?’

‘Yes, sir,’ replied the steward, making a wry face.

‘By Jove, your mushrooms *en surprise*, with a *purée* of game, were most excellent at luncheon to-day; but we’ve had a surprise of another kind,’ laughed the major.

‘And likely to have more of it!’ exclaimed the steward, suddenly pausing in his attendance. ‘Look, sir! Look, gentlemen! Who are these?’

At this exclamation all started to their feet, and looked about them. In the brilliant moonlight it seemed at first as if the shadows of the palms, oaks, and various other trees that grew near the khan were playing a silvery game of light and darkness in the soft wind that sang through them. But almost instantly those wavering outlines became dis-

tinct and defined, and were seen to be men—Arabs or Moors, black-faced, black-legged, with dresses and turbans chiefly of white; and by the flash of steel that came at times from among them, it was also but too apparent that they were armed.

They seemed to be between twenty and thirty in number, and, pausing near the stems of some trees, appeared to be in consultation; for the figures of the smokers could be seen in the balcony or verandah.

‘Why, gentlemen, cuss my top-boots and breeches!’ cried the boatswain of the yacht, hurrying out; ‘here’s a whole regiment of these niggers surrounding us. This here is likely to be an ugly lark, sir,’ he added, touching his hat to Fairway and the Master of Badenoch.

Directed by the sound of his voice, a musket was aimed at him. It flashed redly out in the moonlight; the ball whistled past the boatswain’s ear, and entered the plank of wood behind with a dull thud. But ere the report had died away, every Briton in the

khan had rushed to arms, and was ready to defend himself; and the verandah was instantly vacated, and the light in the room off which it opened was extinguished by Fairway.

‘Who are these scoundrels?’ asked Stanley of their Moorish landlord, who seemed to have turned a pea-green colour in the moonlight.

‘They are thieves—cattle-lifters; more of the same tribe who came with Ben Targa to attack you at the cascade.’

‘And they now come for revenge?’

‘Yes,’ said the Moor, smiling grimly.

It eventually was proved that they were inspired too by some very vague and exaggerated ideas of the contents of Jack Fortnum’s hamper; and this, together with the lust of revenge and outrage, urged them to attack those whom they had traced to the khan—too probably on the information of the wounded Spaniard.

Roused by the musket-shot and the yells without, the ladies had started up in tears

and terror; for to people who had passed all their years in ease and pleasure, who had never looked firmly on life or faced death, the whole situation was undeniably a terrible one.

Ben Hamo, the Emperor of Morocco's general, had full twenty thousand regular troops in the field operating against these predatory marauders and hill-tribes; but he was far away, in the neighbourhood of Algarb and the northern provinces, and no aid could be looked for from him.

The whole situation was replete with the deadliest peril to all the party, who had now fully to learn that it is

‘ A stern and terrible thing to think
How often humanity stands on the brink
Of its grave without any misgiving.’

These Moorish outlaws had not as yet made a more hostile attack upon the khan; but as they drew nearer, their dark mahogany skins and snowy turbans or scarlet fezzes, their glossy black faces and white shining teeth, their crispy beards and brandished

weapons, were all seen distinctly, together with their motions, leapings, and mocking gestures; while their hootings, yellings, and hisses sounded like the production of fiends. They were, as the boatswain said, like so many Ojibbeways well primed with rum and gunpowder; or, as Fairway, who had served in Peel's Naval Brigade, added, like the Sepoy mutineers drunk with opium and *bhang*.

CHAPTER XV.

THE ATTACK.

IN a startled and terrified group the ladies now clung together, while their male defenders took post, by twos and threes, at the various upper windows of the khan, thus giving the edifice the aspect of being full of men.

‘Captain Stanley,’ said Milly imploringly, ‘keep near us if you can.’

‘In doing so my services would be lost to-night, and we cannot spare a man,’ said he. ‘Keep back and out of sight, ladies; for shots will be exchanged directly.’

‘O Mr. Fairway,’ moaned Milly, ‘we shall all be slain now—cruelly slain.’

‘Miss Allingham, I don’t think so—if tough fighting can save you, I mean,’ he replied, with a flush on his cheek that none

could see, for there was no light now in or about the khan save that of the moon. ‘Anyway, a man can only die once, whether it be for glory or duty—or, better than either, *beauty*,’ he added, as he lightly touched her hand.

‘What is that they are shouting so incessantly?’ asked Stanley of the khan-keeper.

The latter hesitated.

‘Speak out, and fear not,’ urged Stanley.

‘I may frighten the women.’

‘You won’t frighten *me*. Well?’

‘That they will send your ears to the ship, and, if not ransomed, they will keep your heads, as they are all in arms against Ben Hamo and the Sultan. I shall go to the kaid of the province for succour.’

‘How far is he from this?’

‘Two leagues.’

‘You will go truly?’

‘Yes, aga.’

‘Fifty English gold pieces are yours, if you bring us aid in time.’

‘If I fail?’

‘Then you won’t get the fifty pieces,’ said Stanley.

‘Why, aga?’

‘Because we shall either be dead or not here to pay it.’

‘On my head be it!’

‘Away, then, and God speed you!’

The Moor disappeared on his errand.

‘Take courage, Mrs. Allingham,’ said Stanley; ‘he has gone to get troops from the kaid, and we meanwhile must defend ourselves as best we can.’

‘Troops!’ said Fairway. ‘He is a deuced deal more likely to bring another gang of rascals.’

‘We can but hope for the best.’

‘And fight to the death!’ cried Fairway, with enthusiasm, as the report of four or five muskets fired in quick succession rang upon the night; and with the aid of the boatswain and Bill the topman he tore up and utterly destroyed the wooden stair or ladder leading from the lower story, closed the trap-door, and placed over it all the heaviest articles

they could find. By this time the eight yachtsmen, Stanley, and his two comrades, with their double-barrelled rifles, and the Master and Craven, had all opened a sputtering fire, right and left, at the assailants, many of whom, after darting forward to fire, shrank behind the stems of trees to reload.

‘Aim well and surely, men,’ cried Stanley, whose blood was fairly up now; ‘be careful of your ammunition, for our lives depend upon it. Make every shot tell surely.’

As the assailants were in the full light of the moon, they were more exposed, and at a disadvantage; while the defenders of the khan could fire from the shadow of the darkened rooms,—a shadow in one place made much deeper by a verandah without. Now and then a shriek rang out upon the air, showing that a bullet had found its billet, and here and there a Moor lay dead on his face or back, and others were seen crawling away, wounded and bleeding. Their balls came with thudding or crashing sounds into the timber-work of the khan; but after nearly an

hour's skirmishing not one of the defenders had been hit. But now the assailants adopted a new mode of attack.

Some of them succeeded in getting into the under-story of the edifice, and began to fire at random up through the floor; thus putting the four ladies in great peril, as, when a ball came ripping up the planks in one place, they fled to another, only to be compelled to leave it too; until the Master conducted them to the sleeping apartments of the edifice—some little dingy dens above, to which access was given by a common ladder.

While a skirmish was maintained with those outside, who skipped nimbly from tree to tree, a sound like thunder was now heard below, as several athletic fellows—using a long piece of timber, which they had found, as a species of battering-ram, poising it together, and hurling it again and again with all their united strength—strove to burst up the floor. By means of this they succeeded in making a great breach in the centre of the

principal room, for a mass of the planks, bieng old, worm-eaten, and decayed, fell down on them; and though half-blinded by the dust, they piled up boxes, barrels, and bales, endeavouring on the top of these to fight their way upward into the heart of the fortress.

To defend this unexpected breach many of the windows were abandoned. Thus the whole of the attacking force got into the lower story; and though the bayonets of the yachtsmen were for a time most effectual in defending the breach in the floor, it widened so fast, by means of planks giving way, that a retreat to the next story became necessary; and to this, as to a citadel, they retired about midnight, Stanley and Knollys covering the movement by a volley from their four barrels, and then scrambling up the narrow stair, as a horde of Moors, like black yelling fiends, came pouring upward through the hole in the floor. The attacking force had evidently gained such an accession of numbers that our friends began to have serious fears that the keeper of the khan had indeed deceived them, and

brought, instead of troops from the kaid, a reinforcement to the enemy.

The firing upward and downward was now concentrated about the very narrow staircase that led to the upper story. Many attempts were made to storm it by the now infuriated Moors, those in front being pushed on by those in rear, till the fixed bayonets of Fairway's men hurled them down with such dreadful wounds in their faces and breasts that ere long their ardour began to cool, and they began to see the impossibility of storming a narrow way defended by so many men, well armed, resolute, and who had added to their means of defence by building a barricade of mattresses and pillows, from behind which they could fire securely down on those below.

The assailants were evidently in consultation as to what was to be done next. Save the moans and cries of the wounded, all was comparative silence below; and the besieged began to hope the attack was about to be abandoned, that the danger was passing away, and they might yet reach the yacht in safety

after all. Four long hours had this conflict been waged; not one of their party had been hit; and the ladies had got so used to the danger that they began to gather courage, more especially as day was at hand, as Fanny's bracelet-watch informed them.

If succour was coming, as Stanley suggested, it should have been there by that time; but what could the fellows below be about?

Removing a portion of the barricade, Fairway endeavoured to peep down, and at that moment a shot was fired that gave him a dreadful wound in the head—fired evidently by a man who was a European wearing a scarlet fez. He uttered a sharp cry of pain, and sank back, covered with blood, in the arms of Larkspur; and then again, as if but a new incentive to slaughter were wanted, the attack and defence of the little staircase was resumed with greater fury than ever. But Fairway's accident had fortunately taught the besieged caution, and to expose themselves as little as possible.

While shouts and yells and the report of muskets and pistols rang fiercely out once more, Fairway was laid on a pallet, and by the light of the waning moon his friend and patron, the Master, endeavoured to dress the wound and stanch the blood. But in vain; the ball had passed somewhere near the base of the brain, and though perfectly sensible, with a sad smile on his face, the poor fellow was evidently sinking fast; and in the gentleness of his nature, even in his sore extremity, he looked kindly and gratefully in the pale faces of the four ladies, who wrung their hands in sorrow around the pallet on which he lay.

It was on Milly's face, as the day stole in, that his eyes chiefly rested. They were blood-shot and glazed, and his tongue nervously played upon dry and feverish lips to moisten them.

Once again the attack on the staircase was resumed, though the defenders stuck to their posts with undiminished vigilance, and amid the temporary silence the now quavering and feeble voice of Frank Fairway was heard.

‘Pray for me, dear Miss Allingham,’ said he; ‘I don’t know very well how to do so myself. I have not been a very bad fellow, but somehow praying isn’t quite in my line. Pray for me when I am gone; and remember that a time must come—long, long may it be in coming!—when—like me—you—you will be waiting—’

‘For what, dear Captain Fairway?’

‘To die.’

‘Do not say so!’ urged Milly, her fine dark eyes welling up anew with tears; and, sooth to say, the terrors of the past day and night had made the eyelids of all the four pink as rose-leaves.

‘I *am* dying, Miss Allingham—I know it and feel it—for I have seen too many die in my time, by land and sea; but I am prouder that I die, fighting for you, and serving *you*, than if I had died—as I was ever ready to do—for the Queen upon the throne!’ he added, while the words came chokingly in his throat with the vehemence of his utterance, and his handsome and earnest, but now sadly wistful,

eyes suffused for a moment with tears, only to become more glazed than ever. 'Master—Master of Badenoch,' said he, speaking with increasing difficulty, 'I insured my life for my poor mother's sake; will—will *this* death cancel the policy?'

'I think not,' replied the Master, clasping his hand. 'Anyway it matters little, my old friend—trust to *me*.'

'And to me,' added Stanley.

'God bless you both! But it is surely getting very dark—I cannot see.'

After a time he sadly and tenderly lifted the hand of Milly to his lips, and died in the act of doing so.

As she withdrew it, there was blood upon her fair fingers, and she shuddered and wept as she covered her face; for this poor fellow, who had never said so, had in secret loved her.

To Milly, more than to Stanley, there was an awkwardness in this solemn manifestation of regard for her. But it was born of the terrible emergency, and, under less exciting

circumstances, it might never have been shown ; so both could but pity him.

‘Poor Frank Fairway!’ said the Master of Badenoch, as he spread a handkerchief over the dead man’s face; ‘he deserved a better fate than to perish thus, and by such coward hands as these.’

‘Yet he has died bravely and well.’

‘Yes, Stanley; and his old mother, whom he idolised, must now be our care, Fanny.’

But the attention of all was once more drawn to the occupants of the lower premises; who now resorted to a new and hitherto unthought-of mode of attack and revenge, which made the stoutest heart among the defenders die within him.

‘Oh,’ moaned Mrs. Allingham, as she wrung her hands, ‘this is indeed a night to which there shall be for us no morning.’

CHAPTER XVI.

A MEETING AT LINCOLN'S INN.

ON the same evening, when the moon was shining so brightly on that khan by the Ceuta road, with all its palms and orange-groves, the same 'regent of the sky,' but sorely shorn of her radiance, looked weirdly down at times, through mist and smoke, on the mighty dome and busy wilderness of London.

In the previous part of this history we have said that the day for Tom's trial had been fixed, and it was to come on with the fatal ordeal of many others who were all more guilty, but none more unfortunate. An able counsel was requisite, and to procure him funds were necessary. Mabel had come to the end of her little purse, but she clung desperately to the hope that Mr. Skeemes, the solicitor, might aid her in procuring one; and on this

evening she had an appointment with him in his chambers at Lincoln's Inn.

As each morning had dawned on Mabel—dawned to announce to her that she *had* slept a little, out of pure weariness of heart—she began to feel the hope of the hopeless; that through the long, lonely, and dreary day to come, some lucky event—she knew not what or how—might happen.

She had long since parted with every atom of jewelry save her wedding-ring, which she hoped would be buried with her; so, even to procure food, she could not part with that. The last sovereign of Stanley's cheque had gone to the learned Skeemes, whose necessities and requisitions in Tom's case seemed a vortex capable of swallowing the Bank of England; and Mabel once more saw grinding poverty staring her in the face.

She thought of Milly Allingham in her sore extremity, but in her pride of nature shrunk from dating a letter—a begging letter as it would undoubtedly be—from a street so humble as hers, to one whose knowledge of

London eastwards ended at the Opera House and the lions in Trafalgar Square. But she knew not then that Milly had sailed with the gay party in the yacht, and still less could she know or conceive that about that very time Milly was in greater peril than herself.

Should she appeal to the old folks at Thaneshurst? No, no; it seemed worse than useless to do so. Baby's birth, and more than that its death—her 'poor little, little darling baby!'—together with the tidings of Tom's great peril, had all failed to win attention from them; so there was nothing left for her but to endure all, even unto the bitter end.

Anon she would think, 'Is it obduracy or pride, or both, that prevent me appealing once more to papa, to seek forgiveness from him and mamma? Forgiveness for what? For in what have I been so wicked?'

A poor emaciated and haggard creature, with care-troubled eyes, and clad in thin rags, passed slowly near her, selling cigar-lights,

solitude of Lincoln's Inn, fearing that when she left Mr. Skeemes's office she should find them on the watch for her.

Ignoring silently occasional remarks they made to her, each encouraging the other to bantering compliments and fresh impertinence, which made the poor girl's cheek redden with an indignation that had the effect of drawing her from her sorrow, while it filled her with terror, she continued to walk quickly on towards Chancery Lane, yet fearing to run, lest by doing so they might be tempted to overtake and actually grasp her.

Suddenly she turned up Serle Street—how she came there, in her terror, she could scarcely tell—and darted into a porch, where the shadow concealed her from view; and as the rain was falling now, she hoped they would not loiter so long as to keep her from her appointment with Mr. Skeemes.

She saw them at fault, pausing and looking about close by her, and her heart beat painfully.

'Why,' thought she, 'am I thus miser-

able? What have I done—what have *we* done, Tom and I?’ and a moment, but a moment only, an emotion of passionate rebellion to the will of Heaven sprang up in her heart.

‘Sly little puss—where the deuce can she have got to?’ said one. ‘What pretty ankles she has!’

‘Perhaps she hangs out hereabout,’ suggested the other; ‘but she seems very poorly dressed.’

‘The goods and gear of this world are very ill divided.’

‘When I think of that, I am more inclined to swear than moralise.’

They had the tone and bearing of well-bred young men, but had both imbibed enough to make them dangerous.

‘Yes, d—n it!’ hiccuped the last speaker; ‘as Brooks says, “The fact that John Brown is starving in the cold, and the fact that Lady Clara Vere de Vere’s Italian greyhound has a warm jacket,” prove how the goods are apportioned. Why should you, Jack, have

ants of which now fled in all directions. But many were overtaken and cut down, and very few were captured, for the succouring force were men of the Askar race, from the remote and wild regions of the interior—a race delighting in blood and slaughter, from which the Moorish army has been recently recruited. And long ere their work was over, the active and ready-handed seamen had begun the task of descending, by beating an opening into that portion of the khān which was not on fire, and getting the ladies safely down from story to story, after which they succeeded in extinguishing the flames; and thereby won the gratitude of the proprietor, to whom the kaid, or military commander of the province, had at once given the aid required, with all the better will as he had an interest in Gibraltar, having more than once had some lucrative contracts for certain supplies of cattle and flour for the garrison.

The aga, or captain of the troop, was not an Askar, but a Moor of the purest type; but as he knew not a word of any language

save his own, any intercourse between him and those he had saved was of necessity very brief. His orders were from the kaid to escort the strangers in safety to their ship; so, after the many hours of harassing excitement, it may readily be supposed that our friends lost no time in making their way to the yacht, bringing off with them as trophies several Moorish sabres and daggers, with half a dozen of those muskets for the manufacture of which Tetuan is ever celebrated, the barrels being formed by a bar of iron wound spirally round a mandrel and welded, and as the welding operation proceeds it is gradually drawn out. Stanley secured that which Ben Targa had handled, and found its lock, though a flint one, a rare specimen of workmanship.

The moment they were all on board the yacht, and the body of poor Fairway covered up and deposited in the long-boat amidships, the ensign was half hoisted, and preparations made for sea.

As for the idea of any protestation or government inquiry in these timid peace-at-

any-price days, they never thought or cared about it. They had got clear off and were once more under the union-jack ; that was enough, and much to be thankful for ; however, as Neddy Knollys said, they should now have the horror of figuring melodramatically in illustrated papers, amid ‘drawings made on the spot,’ by some one who all the while was within sound of Westminster clock or the bell of St. Paul’s.

‘ Jack Fortnum, uncork some moselle ; by Jove, I feel thirsty as a fish !’ exclaimed the Master of Badenoch, on finding himself once more in the dainty *bijou* cabin of the Wolf ; and the order seemed very acceptable to all the gentlemen of his party. As for the ladies, they had all retired to amend their toilets, which their recent adventures had somewhat disordered and dilapidated ; and so utterly were the four exhausted by excitement, that it was evident but little would be had of their society till the yacht reached Gibraltar. Moreover, they were all undoubtedly looking ill and pale ; and now Rimmel

and Jean Vincent Bully's *vinaigre de toilette*, &c., were extensively resorted to, while the gentlemen betook them to iced wine or sundry brandies-and-sodas, and swearing roundly at those rascals, so many of whom they had left stark and stiff with their glazed eyes staring skyward.

Frank Fairway, ere he left the yacht, to be prepared for any emergency, and true to his old man-of-war training and instincts, had her hove pretty short on her cable with a spring upon it, keeping her broadside to the village, with her guns brought over to one side and shotted; the jib and flying jib roused out of their nettings ready for hoisting home, and the fore and aft mainsail loose in its brails to let fall. Thus she was soon ready for sea, and working out of the little bay into the straits in the evening sunshine.

‘Thank Heaven we are on board again!’ said Fanny to her husband, as she felt the cutter moving through the water.

‘Life is too short for such affairs as we have been engaged in,’ said he, laughing. ‘I

should not have cared much if I had been alone; but with *you*, dearest Fanny, it certainly made a deuced difference.'

Mrs. Allingham, completely overcome, remained in her cabin. But after a time Milly came on deck, and Stanley hastened to offer her his arm and lead her to a seat near the taffrail; and as he pressed her hand, she gave one or two almost convulsive sobs.

'What agitates you now?' he asked softly.

'Happiness and gratitude: happiness to find myself with you, and great gratitude to God for all our escapes,' she replied earnestly, and then smiled.

The time they had been separated had developed in a more womanly way the graces Stanley had seen ripening in the girl; the liquid softness of her dark eyes, with their long lashes, was the same, but the somewhat haughty expression of brow and lip had passed away.

During the little voyage out, Milly—aware, of course, that Stanley was in garrison at Gibraltar—had often thought, with a con-

scious blush on her cheek, of her first meeting with him, and of his surprise in finding her there; of their explanations and mutual greeting, the fashion in which they should take place, and so forth. But their perilous involvements, and this rescue from ruffians in a foreign land—in Morocco, in Africa—was an event altogether so unforeseen that it took the edge off the whole affair in one way, and yet put a keener edge upon it in another. So at last—at last—she was with him whose love she really prized, and her coquetry with whom had led to all her and his sorrows.

They spoke long and earnestly, often passionately, and were silently happy, hand in hand, and sometimes cheek to cheek, after the twilight fell, and the shore of that blue but tideless sea receded from them.

‘O Rowland love,’ said she, ‘it was indeed a strange destiny that brought you hither—brought you to *me* at a time so critical.’

‘Yes, Milly, it was destiny; what else? I came to meet you in your peril with that emotion which, as some one says, comes to

us in a dream of the dead: "We feel no surprise, we address them as those whom we expected and desired to meet;" and in this stunned sense, as if it was all confused and unreal, did I meet you, Milly.'

After a time, he said,

'It was so good and kind of Fanny Conyers—Mrs. Comyn, I mean—to bring you out in the yacht when I could not get home.'

'Yes, most kind, was it not?' said Milly, colouring, however, with the knowledge that the whole affair had been a little pet scheme of her own; 'and I must own to you that I was most anxious that we should touch at Gibraltar; for though I *did* treat you ill in London and at Thaneshurst, you have ever been all goodness and truth to me.'

'Yes, ever, Milly, ever!' replied Stanley, utterly oblivious of the proposal he had—in revenge, of course—made to the Senhora Maria de Vega at San Miguel.

Indeed, to do him justice, we believe he had quite forgotten his sojourn in that sunny isle of oranges.

‘Rowland, I thought you would never forgive me.’

‘For what, darling?’

‘The affair of the white camellia. It looked so ill; and that we should never be as we are now, so happy. But *how* could you leave me, Rowland, as you did? Another moment might—nay, must—have explained all. How miserable I was! And then came the story of the shipwreck, and that well-nigh killed me.’

‘Tears, Milly! Do not weep.’

‘Promise me that you will never, never—’

‘Will leave you again?’

‘No.’

‘What then?’

‘Be jealous more.’

‘Never, darling!’

Fortunately Bill the topman, who was at the wheel, was very much engaged in his steering and keeping the fore and aft mainsail full, otherwise he might have seen what he was not intended to see.

‘That ball at Brighton—’

‘Do not let us recall it, Rowland.’

‘Why?’

‘It is painful.’

‘It has led to the happiest hour of my life, Milly.’

‘And mine; but all my after-sorrow was the punishment of my pride in those days.’

‘And mine was the punishment of my pride, suspicion, and impetuosity, love,’ he added, laughing.

We have said they were often silent; but such silence is sweet and eloquent too. For ‘the reliance on unexpressed sympathy is the surest indication of intimacy having reached the stage when effort is needless; the harbour-bar is passed, and a haven of serene security attained.’

The bright stars were out now, but the moon was yet below the chain of the Atlas Mountains. The breeze was fair and soft, and a sensation of luxury was imparted by the gentle roll of the cutter. The only light on deck was that from the binnacle, which glared redly on the embrowned visage and brawny

throat of Bill the topman. The wake astern seemed a train of green sparks blended with white foam, while the dim and shifting shadows of the great boom mainsail and gaff topsail that tapered away aloft marked the outline of the canvas against the starlit sky.

How happy these two were on deck together, though certainly the memory of *who* lay dead, stark, and stiff, covered by a union jack, in the long-boat amidships, marred their emotions a little for the time.

Occasionally they heard voices from the cabin, where Joe Trevor, a sub., with a bright healthy English face browned by the sun of Bermuda and Gibraltar, and eyes that were the index of a light and honest heart—a heart in the right place—was devoting himself to Fanny's sister, the younger Miss Conyers.

Long, long was the story that Stanley had to tell Milly of his adventures since their separation at Brighton: his voyage and his shipwreck, his sufferings and his tender yearnings all ended now, when he could lie on the deck

at her feet, or sit by her side, hand clasped in hand, and eye bent on eye.

And Milly, seated on the deck with *him*, became as cheerful, as merry, and *riante* as if the whole horrible episode of that perilous expedition on shore, with all its accompaniments of musketry, death, and wounds, had been a daydream instead of a stern day reality—an episode of Moorish life she was never likely to forget. And when she smiled, on each of her pearl-white teeth a light, like a diamond, glittered on the pure enamel. And how fondly could they gaze into each other's eyes now, and never, never feel weary!

‘Gibraltar lights are almost visible,’ said a voice beside them.

‘Yes,’ said another. ‘Well, Oysterley of ours was a good sort to offer to take my guard for me; but I’ll be back sooner than he expects. Old Mulligrubs, the staff-surgeon, didn’t see my way to sick-leave, or I should have cut Gib., and been at Hampton Court by this time.’

The Master of Badenoch and Neddy

Knollys had come on deck to have 'a quiet weed before turning-in;' so now Milly Allingham retired to her cabin, and soon slept like

'A dove out-wearied with her flight,'

and when she awoke the cutter was moored, with all her canvas handed, under the giant shadow of the Rock of Gibraltar.

CHAPTER XIX.

WEDDING-BELLS.

‘IN novels,’ says a writer, ‘the reader will find a hundred strange meetings and coincidences: old lovers coming face to face after years of separation; friends thought dead rising up at the corners of the streets; and good characters appearing to confound the bad. But real life has often, more than we imagine, its strange meetings and coincidences too.’ And in evidence of this, here we have Milly Allingham and Stanley together in Gibraltar.

But as there can be no pleasure in this world without some alloy, that of the engaged couple was marred, in one way, by a severe illness that came upon Mrs. Allingham, and confined her to her hotel; an illness consequent on all she had undergone on the other side of the straits. As it was only extreme perturbation of the spirits and overtaking of

the nervous system, it passed away in time, amid such peace and rest as could be procured in that Babel of many tongues, strange noises, and incessant drumming and bugling; and as there are always four or five regiments of the line in Gibraltar, together with artillery and a numerous staff, Milly and her two friends looked forward to great gaiety.

Knollys had informed Joe Trevor of the relations between Stanley and Miss Allingham; thus, on parting with her at the hotel, he said,

‘I have a very fair Collard in my quarters on Windmill Hill, and I hope to hear you and Rowland sing together.’

‘He has a good voice,’ replied Milly, colouring.

‘A voice that would make his fortune—if—if—’

‘If what, Mr. Trevor.’

‘He had not made it already,’ replied Joe, laughing.

‘How?’

‘In winning *you*. Excuse me, dear Miss.

Allingham; but Rowland and I are old friends—I know all, and from my heart I congratulate you both.'

And, bowing very low, Joe marched off to the barracks, leaving Milly's face covered with a momentary blush.

Fairway was buried at the North Front, and, as he had been in her Majesty's navy, a party of Stanley's regiment fired over him. The Master of Badenoch was the chief mourner; and Milly, from a place where she stood, could hear the three volleys waking the echoes of the mighty rock.

'Poor fellow—he loved me!' thought she. It was a bit of her old nature, after all.

And when the time came for attending to the interests of his old mother, then far away in pleasant Devonshire, they were not forgotten by the Master and by Rowland Stanley.

So now, for a time, the latter had Milly all to himself, and the hours of his daydreams in Gibraltar were actually realised when he and she wandered together in the rock-hewn halls or gun-galleries, watching the shipping in the

straits, or listening to the sounds in the town below, and of the billows breaking on the rocks. Daily they were there in his hours of leisure from military duty, rambling side by side, her hands clasped fondly on his arm; her face looking upward into his, her smile and touch seeming to infuse in every vein and nerve the ardour and enthusiasm of her own loving nature, while talking of the happier future that lay beyond the happy present; when they should stand together before an altar-rail, vowing to love and honour each for life; and she could laugh more merrily than ever when her friend Fanny sang her old teasing song, 'He thinks I do not love him;' for right well did Stanley know she 'loved him now.'

And with what genuine delight did he show her all the wonders of the castellated rock!—Gibraltar, where the damp and hot, dull and dusty Levanter, that had so nearly flooded the Wolf, came sweeping through the straits; Gibraltar the queer and anomalous, where the British sign-boards hang side by

a thousand a year, when I have just two hundred?"

Mabel had started and shivered on hearing her former name mentioned, but it was poor Shirley Brooks the speaker referred to.

'By Jove, here is our little beauty!' he suddenly exclaimed, as he darted into the porch, and seized her by one of her wrists.

'Please, sir, to let me go—to leave me,' she urged, and looked wildly round her for aid.

'Oh, I am not afraid of the police,' said he, laughing.

'Have you fear of the devil?'

'Bah! who believes in the parson's patent-screw?'

But now Mabel, overmastered by her fear and alarm lest her appointment might be a failure, burst away from them, and flew like a hare along Serle Street, with the rain beating in her face; and believing they were behind her, she fell—when just about to fall fainting—into the arms of a stout, white-haired, old gentleman, who had then alighted

from a four-wheeled cab. Encouraged by his years and general appearance, the girl clung to him, wildly exclaiming,

‘Save me, sir! Save me, or I shall die!’

Her voice—that sweet voice with a singular chord in it—must have gone like an arrow to the heart of her hearer, whose arm tightened round her, as he cried in a voice like a sob,

‘Mabel—my own girl, Mabel!’

Blurred with tears and sodden with rain, the sweet and pale but startled face was turned up for a moment to his.

‘Papa!’ was all she could gasp out, as she fainted on his breast, to the astonishment of the stolid cabby, who stood, whip in hand, patiently expectant of his fare.

CHAPTER XVII.

WHAT FOLLOWED.

APROPOS of the visit of that distinguished functionary, Mr. William Weazle, to Thaneshurst, and the discovery of the missing notes in Alfred Foxley's repositories, Mr. Brooke, despite the objections of his better-half, who urged that he should not mix himself up with such a person as Seymour in any way, had written to his solicitors to take the case in hand; and on this evening it chanced that he was paying them a second visit on the subject, when he encountered Mabel in her terror and distress.

So the lucky event—the mysterious something—of which Mabel had dreamed and hoped for at times, had actually happened at last. A double event as it proved; for now, after she recovered consciousness, she was to hear the story of the discovery made by Weazle,

and of the wondrous villany of the still absent Foxley.

When Mabel recovered, she was in a kind of parlour or waiting-room, attached to the chamber of the solicitors, one of whom, with a fat smug face that never gave the smallest indication of what was passing in his mind, held a glass of wine to her lips, while she lay with her head pillowed on the breast of her father, when a good shower of tears proved her best and easiest relief.

Meanwhile he caressed her tenderly, and surveyed with sorrow, alarm, and a compunction that amounted to agony, her livid face—the face that men, and women too, had often turned and looked after—her haggard anxious eyes, her sodden and sordid dress, and its total absence of all ornament or set-off in the way of frill, ribbon, collar, or gloves.

And this was the daughter he had so idolised, and for whom he had uselessly piled up his wealth! He reflected that he had servants at Thaneshurst,—Mulbery, Digweed, and Polly Plum,—enjoying every comfort

and luxury; horses in stall, of which old Pupkins took a fatherly care—there was not a nag in the stables but cost him more than would have saved from misery, it might be utter ruin, the poor girl whose petted pad had been sent from them in anger to Tattersall's. And *why* was all this, he asked of himself now, with something of indignation at 'Martha dear,' as he was beyond her influence then.

The solicitors, precious though their time, were human enough to leave father and child for a little space together. So they withdrew, the one with the smug face, and he whose legal mask was a stereotyped smiling one. As they retired, Mabel gave one hasty glance round the dingy wall, covered with faded paper of no particular pattern, the gas-jets without glasses, and the fly-blown almanacs, law-lists, and prospectuses of public companies that hung around her, together with a remarkably yellow map of London; and again hid her face in the breast of her father. To her eyes it seemed that his hair looked thinner, more

silvery or like thistle-down, and that his face showed deeper lines than it was wont to do.

‘And so, papa, you pardon me?’ she whispered.

‘I do, darling; I do!’

‘And Tom too—my poor Tom!’

‘I suppose I must, especially after all we know now.’

‘O papa, our case—Tom’s and mine—was not to be judged by ordinary rules; a sore, sore pressure was put upon us.’

‘By whom or what—Fate?’

‘No, papa.’

‘Who then?’

‘By mamma,’ replied the girl reluctantly. ‘But, O papa,’ she added, with a wonderfully sweet intonation of voice, and as if she would never weary of addressing him in her old childlike way, ‘to think that Tom’s innocence will be declared to all the world! Till to-night I have not been happy since—since—’ she faltered and paused.

‘Since you left me.’

‘No, papa, since—’

‘When, my darling?’

‘Since poor baby died.’

‘What baby, Mabel?’

‘Mine! Is it possible you do not know, you have not heard, that I had a baby once? But have none now—it is dead!’

Her tears were falling faster than ever now, and a dark frown gathered on her father’s face.

‘I have been deceived in some fashion—kept in the dark,’ he muttered.

‘Perhaps, if we had been possessed of more means to purchase better medical skill, it might have been preserved to us; but we were so poor, Tom and I. At such a terrible time as that,’ she continued, but very gently, ‘dear mamma should have remembered that, though indignant at Tom for making me his wife, I was not the less her child.’

‘I feel all your just rebuke, pet Mabel; but we were all in ignorance—’

‘Yet Tom wrote to you, as in duty bound.’

‘His letter never reached me!’

‘And, as no answer came, we thought

your hearts must be steeled indeed against us, if even death—the death of one so dear to me as my little child—could win us no forgiveness.’

‘My darling,’ said her father, ‘do not let us upbraid each other; but let us forget the past by amending the future. I have searched for you long in vain, in many ways; and now I have found you, thanks be to God! When Tom Seymour robbed me of you, he robbed me of happiness alone; your mamma he deprived of happiness, and much more than that—he disappointed her ambition.’

‘I know that but too well. Mamma would have had me marry some one of her choosing—one whom I could neither love nor respect. Why should she debar me from that freedom of choice she herself had, when she chose *you*, darling? You would not have a girl whose heart was true give up the man whom she loved and had chosen in her heart for her husband, and who was every way irreproachable, because his fortune—or rather the want of it—displeased her family?’

‘Enough, pet Mabel; we shall be happy in the time to come, happy from this night. Thank Heaven, Tom is innocent; and it was while working in his cause I met you. He has been the victim—’

‘Of a very fiend, papa!’ exclaimed Mabel, with the first expression of anger her face had ever worn.

‘Alf, my sister’s son, who, when with me, was as decorous as the Archbishop of Canterbury; but from this night, Mabel, let us never, never name him more.’

Mabel had read, or learned somewhere, that figures and the hard study of statistics, as folks have to study them in the atmosphere of Cornhill, went a long way to weaken the tender affections of the human heart, or to harden that necessary utensil; and she had been beginning to find this an excuse for her father. But now she found the mistake of such a hypothesis, for his whole soul was full of paternal love for her—a love that was stronger now than ever.

Anxious to repair, so far as in him lay, the

mischief that had been done, next morning Mr. Brooke—after leaving Mabel at a comfortable and fashionable hotel, surrounded by boxes of gloves and bonnets, mantles and costumes, &c., which an adjacent *modiste* had brought for her selection with wonderful celerity—set off with his solicitors for the prison where Tom Seymour yet remained in ignorance of the turn his affairs were taking. Even the lawyers were strongly impressed with the injustice that had been done him, though they were men having those pleasant and amiable views of life in general, and ‘society’ in particular, the study of their profession is apt to inculcate, believing only in what they saw, and nothing that they heard, unless it could be turned into a monetary screw to extract cash from some one.

The mode in which the lawyers—the Ben Targas of Lincoln’s Inn—employed by Mr. Brooke for Tom Seymour achieved the liberation and complete exoneration of the latter is somewhat apart from our general narrative. Suffice it to say that, after certain formulas

had been gone through, Tom was soon free, happy, and honoured again; though Mabel could never, without a shudder, recall her sad and heart-breaking visits to the office of Mr. Skeemes, that legal horseleech; so he, thank Heaven, passes forthwith out of our humble story.

As there is no public prosecutor in England, Mr. Brooke had influence enough to get the turpitude of Alfred Foxley passed over, or somehow committed, so far as the world went, to oblivion. But for a long time to come that worthy found it necessary to favour certain German watering-places with his society, and to recruit his finances by industry, *i.e.* the closest study of all chances at cards and billiards, among those gaming-houses whose proprietary was a disgrace to the minor princes of Germany.

While enjoying all the happiness that perfect freedom and ample funds can give, his victims forgave or forgot him; though it was long ere Tom or Mabel could forget the general horrors of their late calamity: the

foul and cruel accusation now explained away; the grim prison, with its odious garb, and all its crushing and infamous features and accessories, after which poor Tom was apt to be surprised, if not positively startled, to find at dinner a couple of solemn-faced men or attentive waiters, flitting like spectres at his beck with champagne, an *entrée*, a change of plates, and so forth.

But at last the time came when it all seemed like an ugly dream, or a tale that is told.

And now to return to those whom we left in such deadly peril a few pages back.

CHAPTER XVIII.

TOGETHER AT LAST.

WE have said that the assailants of the khan resorted to an unthought-of mode of attack, or vengeance. This was *fire*.

Below, the alarming and unmistakable odour of burning wood became apparent; the crackling of flames was next heard, and a volume of smoke ascended the narrow staircase which the miscreants had failed to storm.

They had evidently collected timber, casks, and other lumber in the lower place, and set it all on fire to consume the edifice and all that were in it, and they watched the progress of destruction with yells and cries of savage exultation; but fortunately for their intended victims, it was slower than they expected.

‘Aid yet may come, and we must fight for our lives,’ exclaimed Stanley, while horror and anxiety began to mingle with despair in

his heart, as he thought of Milly's too probable fate.

‘We must retreat to the roof and remain there till relief comes—if it ever comes at all,’ said Larkspur.

‘The roof—but how?’ asked several.

‘There is a trap-door—a hatchway here, gentlemen,’ said Bill the topman; and with the assistance of the other seamen he tore up the ladder by which they had ascended, and planting it anew on the upper floor, the trap-door was thereby reached and opened. The roof, as is usual in the houses of Orientals, was perfectly flat, with very broad eaves; thus affording protection from the bullets that began to whistle upward from below the moment this new movement was discovered. The ladies, half-dead with terror at their approaching fate, were assisted up first. Then all the rest followed, and at once betook them to giving pot-shots at the head of any Moor that was visible from the lofty perch where they lurked.

Day was dawning now. The east towards

Ceuta, and where the headland known as the Acho of El Minah stood grimly up, was pale with opal-tinted light, and rapidly it seemed to rise like a white mist from the ocean; but in the west the stars were yet twinkling amid the blue expanse.

Fairway was gone; but amid the excitement of the time, and the natural, earnest, and deep regret for his death—assassination it seemed—the pressing danger that menaced themselves drew them of a stern necessity from dwelling then on the event.

‘I have just shot him, Milly,’ said Stanley grimly, through his set teeth.

‘Who?’ she asked.

‘The man in the scarlet fez—the scoundrel who killed Fairway.’

‘Ah, how dreadful all this is!’ she moaned, with her arms round her pallid mother; ‘what you must have felt when you saw him fall!’

‘Felt!’ repeated Stanley bitterly. ‘I felt but what I feel now—a fierce and merciless emotion to kill all, and spare not.’

‘Right, sir,’ cried one of the yachtsmen, ‘or they’ll kill us.—Blaze away, lads; but always duck down after firing.’

The effects of the flames below soon began to be felt, and the situation was becoming deplorable. The men all knew that, had the ladies not been with them, it would be a better fate to sally out and die fighting hand to hand, than to perish miserably by the most horrible and appalling of all deaths when the roof fell in, as ere long it must inevitably do; and some of the seamen were already whispering of this to each other.

The crackling of the wood, the awful odour of fire, and the volumes of smoke increased together. Ere long the latter began to roll darkly out of the lower windows and other apertures. A crisis in the fate of all was approaching fast, when suddenly they saw close at hand a body of Ben Hamo’s Moorish cavalry, clad in short blue jackets with breeches and tarbooshes of scarlet, come galloping, with sabres brandished, through the grove of trees beside the khan, the assail-

side with those of Spaniards, Moslems, negroes, Jews, and Moors; where the kilted Highlander, the ruddy-faced Saxon linesman, the showy English nursemaid, the officer in blue undress or mufti, and the fashionable girls of the garrison, are all mingled together in the streets or Alameda, philandering under the aloes or date-trees; where sometimes the brightness of the sunshine would gladden the heart of a photographer; and where the Protestants worship God in a church fashioned like a Moorish mosque with horse-shoe arches. But he and she loved best to linger under the flowering scarlet aloes in the garden of the Alameda, or the ostrich-feather-like sprays of the pepper-trees.

And many a gay riding party was organised for them by Knollys and Trevor, where, *viâ* Rondo, they would gallop as far as Granada—the Granada of Washington Irving’s delightful tales.

A clever writer says that history may sometimes repeat itself, but the happiness in human lives never.

He would not have thought so had he seen our lovers together in old Gib. And now Stanley could show her in reality the old Moorish tower, the gate of Charles V., and all those places he had once sketched in the hope of showing them to her at home in England. Milly, we have said, in the earlier part of our story, was a well-read girl ; thus she could 'get up' rather more than an ordinary young-ladylike enthusiasm concerning the great fortress, as she knew all about how in the eighth century five hundred Moors first landed there under Tarif Ebn Zarcas, whose name was given to the mountain, which he held despite King Roderick and his Goths ; how it was taken by a handful of English seamen in the days of the good Queen Anne, and valiantly defended against all the might of France and Spain by the 'old Cock of the Rock' in the time of George III.

All Milly's perceptions were sharpened, and rendered more observant and acute, by the keen inspiration of love. It had always been necessary to her coquettish nature 'to be

the *first* object in some one's affection;' and now all the affection and love of her heart lay absorbed in the idea of Stanley.

In their lightness of heart they ultimately learned to laugh at what he called 'the row over the way. How little could I imagine,' said he, 'when summoned, like the melodramatic seaman, to succour "lovely woman in distress," she was to be embodied in my own Milly!'

'And in Morocco, too!' she added.

'It does seem incredible; but truly there are more things in heaven and earth—you know the quotation, darling.'

It was evident that there were a good many kisses on earth, as the sentry in the nearest battery might have seen; but he was intently watching—to all appearance—a sail off Al Kazar point.

We have said that, when on board the transport that bore them from Bermuda, Stanley and Knollys tossed, or drew lots, for who was to enact the part of groomsman to the other, and that the latter won; so he was duly

reminded of that circumstance, and had to enact that part (before his own affair could come off at home) in the church of Gibraltar, and in full puff—‘his best bib and tucker,’ he called it; he was a groomsman to the life, with every joke appropriate to the occasion for the bride, the bridegroom, and the bridesmaids.

In such a place as Gibraltar we need scarcely say that the military element was a predominating one at the marriage, and the church was crowded by the officers and men of his regiment to ‘see Stanley of ours turned off,’ for he was an especial favourite with all ranks; and the beauty of the bride, who was given away by the general commanding—an old V.C., with as many wounds as wrinkles—drew a murmur of applause from all.

‘The first few hours after the wedding-ring is on the finger are not the most cheerful ones to the most light-hearted fairy that ever fluttered from home to the arms of a stranger,’ says the author of *One-and-Twenty*. No doubt it is often thus; but it was not so in the case

of Milly. There was so much military jollity in the whole affair—in the speeches, jokes, the wedding-breakfast, the clangour of the bells, the crashing of the band, who were tipped handsomely (and ever so many more, to avoid the absurd ‘chairing’ peculiar to some regiments), the cheers, the volleys of old shoes and hearty wishes that accompanied them on board the Southampton P. and O. liner, which had all her bunting flying in honour of the occasion; in short, so general was the hubbub—that, till she was in the seclusion of her own cabin, Milly had literally not time to think or to reflect that at last she, who that morning rose from bed Millicent Stanhope Allingham, ‘a spinster,’ was now the wedded wife of Rowland Stanley.

So, ‘in the mimic life which players on the stage show the world before it, the green curtain invariably falls on a scene akin to this—Corydon and Chloris hand in hand, and gray hairs blessing them. Thus ends the story; and the stage is cleared away for the ballet or the farce.’

CHAPTER XX. .

CONCLUSION.

THE following day saw the Wolf of Badenoch going, with a flowing sheet, before a stiff Levanter, out of the straits and bound for Cowes, with all its party, a little silent and moody after the festivities of yesterday, and Bill the topman's hands steady on the wheel as the Moorish walls and towns of Tarifa melted into ocean on her lee.

And now to look elsewhere.

Mabel's marriage was a fact; it could not be undone, so Mrs. Brooke had—in the end—to reconcile herself to the inevitable, and open her arms to her daughter and her daughter's husband, and welcome them together to Thaneshurst.

‘Needs not to tell,’ as Scott would say, how all the household, from the butler to the ‘buttons,’ welcomed back Mabel, of whose suffer-

ings and adventures none save her parents knew ; or how, when Mrs. Brooke gave her fair fat hand, every finger of which was gemmed, to Tom, he took it kindly in his, and even kissed that lady's remarkably plump cheek in a most son-in-law manner—a trifle frigidly, perhaps, at first. Well, he did not *owe her* much in the way of regard.

Once again Mabel saw the arbour in which she and Tom had sat on the night of their elopement, its clustering vines now tinted with the gorgeous hues of autumn, and the garden where, in happy childhood, she had pursued the butterflies and sunbeams ; and now, when again she could bury her pretty face in the cool freshly-gathered roses, all her heartfelt yearnings in the old boarding-house at Harley Street were gratified.

When old Digweed went over the conservatory with her ; when she went with old Pupkins through the stables ; or when pretty Polly Plum dressed her hair ere she retired for the night to her old room, and prattled parish gossip at her back about the Rev.

Alban Butterley or sleek Dr. Clavicle, it sometimes seemed to Mabel as if she had never been out of Thaneshurst at all ; only she knew that Tom Seymour was her husband, and would come to her anon, when he had finished his last cigar on the terrace without, or in the smoking-room with papa.

‘There be trees and flowers as may be transplanted safely ; but there be some as won’t be transplanted, and grow only in their old soil ; and I think you be the same as one of these, Missie Mabel,’ said the old gardener, for though a wedded wife to him she was Missie Mabel still.

Again, with Tom, she could rush her horse through wooded Stanmer Park, or scamper over the breezy and grassy South Downs, and see the Ouse winding away towards Newhaven. Again they rode through the lane where, as it was supposed, Tom’s horse threw him, and Mabel’s secret escaped her in her sorrow and alarm.

Reconciled to her mother, forgiven fully by her father, Mabel’s happiness would have

about the streets till his night duties came at the theatre, aware all the time that *she* on whom he had spent so much in the days of his prosperity was away on the river with Larkspur, to whom she was said to be married—away sometimes for a week's voyage up Oxford way, where the silvan banks were overhung by the foliage of June, and were fringed with luscious meadow-sweet, where the black water-fowl scuttled in the reedy reaches, and the green woods stretched for miles. He thought of this and the luxuries they enjoyed together—luxuries such as *he* had once shared with her; and as he buttoned his threadbare coat to hide his lack of shirt-front the conviction maddened him, for he loved Aimée as much as it was possible for his selfish heart to love any one beyond himself.

What made him the more savage was that she made no concealment of the fact that he had been completely supplanted, and that Larkspur had become the god of her idolatry.

‘Well, well,’ Alf would mutter, with an

execration, 'these things don't last for ever, and I don't envy *him* his bargain.'

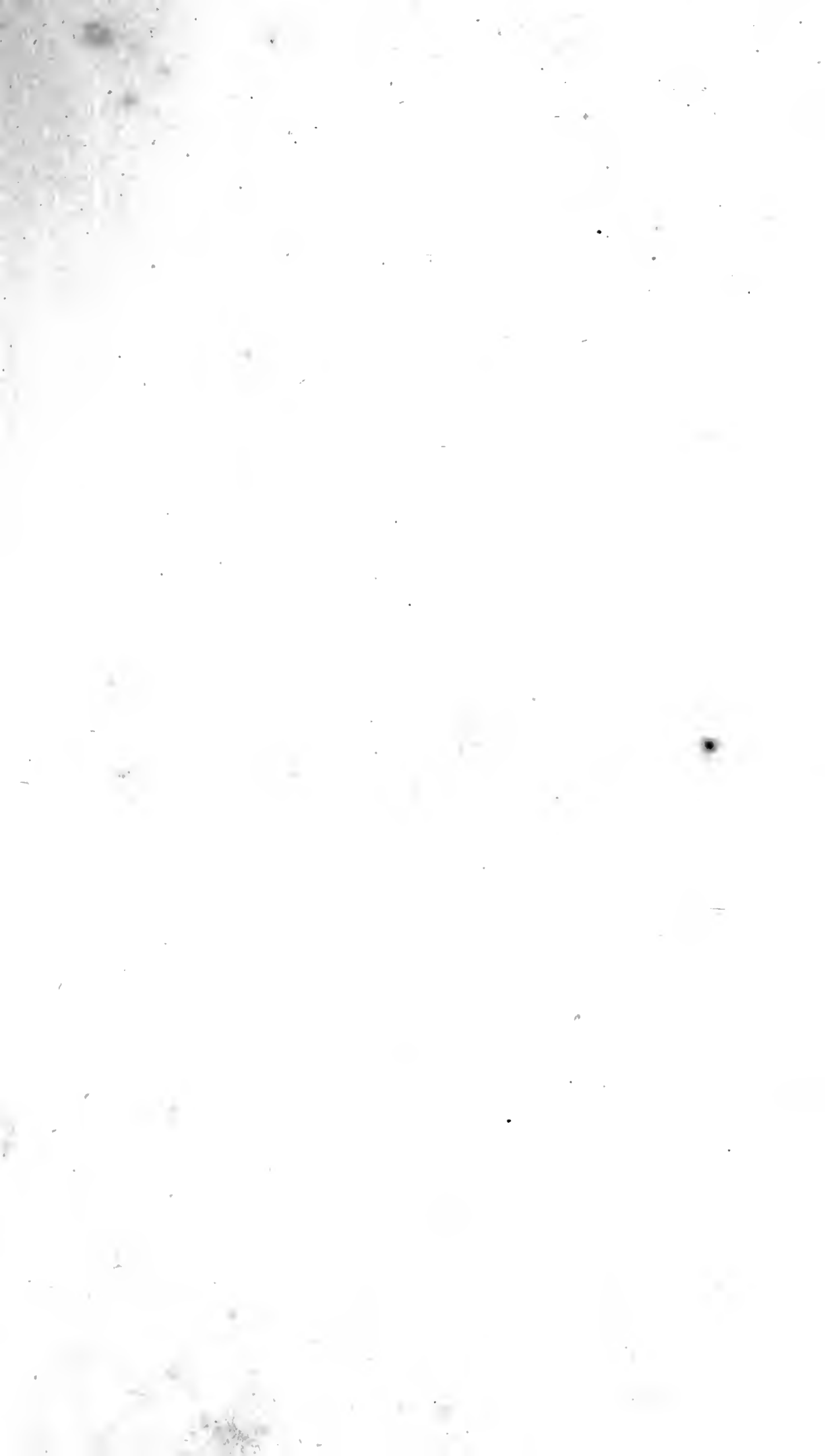
But in all this we are somewhat anticipating.

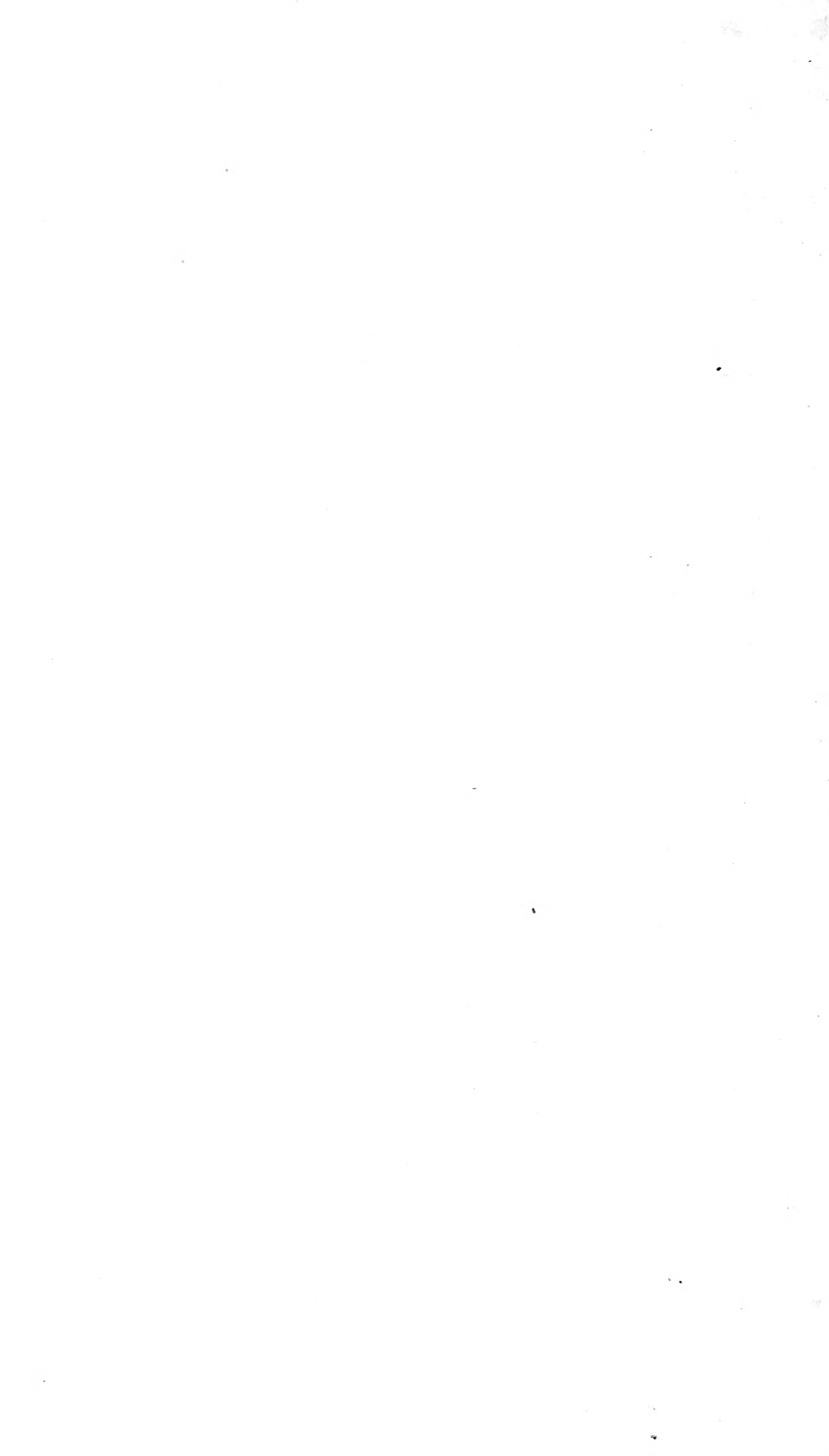
On their marriage tour, Milly and Stanley, before going to Connaught Place, were to go to Thaneshurst for the Christmas festivities, as a letter from Mabel informed them. The Master of Badenoch and Fanny, 'little Dimples,' and every one else she cared for, had been invited too; so the time bade fair to be a most joyful one.

As soon as he could get leave for England from the colonel, Neddy Knollys lost no time in making his way to Hampton Court, where his pretty cousin Kate awaited him in all the bloom of her widowhood; and he,—as he wrote,—after assuring himself that old Hippisley was this time indeed defunct, was not long in following his gay friend Rowland Stanley 'from the sunshine of love into the night of matrimony.'

THE END.









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